

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

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

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

When we don't learn to regulate our emotions as children, when our homes feel unsafe, when we don't feel seen and heard, even in what feels like the most beautiful childhood, we can carry those lessons of feeling disappointed or anxious, having a quick temper, getting easily offended, taking things personally, communicating indirectly versus just stating our needs, and so much more into adulthood.

When we're in these reactive states, blaming others and abdicating responsibility for our own thoughts and how we feel, this is emotional childhood. Today, we're talking about the antidote; emotional adulthood. And this framework has been so useful for me in my own health and healing. Curious to learn more? Keep on listening, my love.

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 love. I hope this finds you doing so well. I'm so excited about this wee series I'm doing about our inner child self and how sweet younger you shows up in beautiful and limiting ways in your physical adulthood.

I've been spending a lot of time with little ones lately, like actual children in addition to my own inner children. And it's been so interesting to watch how the actual three, four, and eight-year-olds operate, how they ask for attention or demand it if they aren't getting their needs met, how they decline to do things that we think are good for them if they don't want to because autonomy is so limited when you're a dependent kiddo.

Like, sometimes they don't want to eat or sleep or drink water, get out of the sun, go to the bathroom in ways we prefer. They stake their claim on

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

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

their own little bodies. And one of the first things I learned in my pediatric rotations was that there are two things you cannot control about a child; whether they agree to eat and what comes out of them in the bathroom, and that trying to control those two things is a recipe for disaster.

And kids cling to those two things because while they can get picked up and moved around, strapped into car seats, dressed and washed and put in a bed whether they want to or not, one thing they can control is their own consumption and excretion. And as a human who is fascinated by human psychology and the choices we make to feel powerful over our bodies, minds, and spirits, it's so interesting to watch how we grownups can fall right into these child patterns of thought, feeling, and action and can wind up in emotional childhood, stomping our feet, throwing little tantrums, declining to do things that are good for us because something inside us says no or because we just want to stake a claim and hear ourselves taking back that power in a way that might not serve us.

My love, if you're listening to this and you're kind of like, what is this lady babbling about, what is this concept of emotional childhood, I want to encourage you to hit pause, subscribe to the podcast so it all gets magically downloaded to your phone, and go back and listen to episode 23, which is conveniently titled Emotional Childhood. Take a listen, come on back, and listen to this episode, Emotional Adulthood, where we're going to be talking all about just how challenging and rewarding it can be to learn to be an emotional adult.

So, I think that being an adult, in all the ways, is so empowering compared to being a dependent kiddo, and this is our topic for today; embodied emotional adulthood, the antidote to being an emotional child.

Quick little refresher for you – two episodes ago, we talked together, you and I, about the concept of the inner child; that child part of us that continues to inhabit us into adulthood and can guide us to act in ways that

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

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

we may not love as adults. Your child parts can lead you to hide yourself and to avoid being vulnerable if those things were scary for you as a child.

Your inner child, or children because we have a range of ages alive and kicking within us, can drive you to be an over-sharer, filling the space in any conversation lest there be silence your little one finds scary or disconcerting. Your inner child can also point out the wonder of the world, the beauty and joy and amazingness of dogs and sunsets and flowers.

Being in touch with your inner child is not just some constant slog through old pain, wounds, and resentments. This connection can bring a lot of magic to your world, and it has to mine, as well as an awful lot of healing if you're willing to go there. And all of this focus on our inner child brought us to the concept of emotional childhood last week; the idea that sometimes, although we may be living in our adult body, we can interact with the world as a child, that is from and as that child self that lives within us.

And today, we'll focus on the parallel concept of emotional adulthood and how to invite in more of this mature, confident, self-assured, responsible energy. Focusing on centering myself in my emotional adulthood while honoring and loving my inner child deeply has been super healing for me. Make sure you subscribe to the show so that it magically transmits to your webbernets machine each week. You won't want to miss next week's episode on re-parenting ourselves. It's going to be a good one and is an important rounding off of the last month of episodes, so make sure you tune in, my love.

So, one of the ways I know I am in emotional adulthood is that I'm taking responsibility for everything that is mine and nothing that isn't. the emotional adult doesn't need to blame or shame or guilt anyone else or to take on other people's thoughts, feelings, or reactions as our own, but rather to own your own stuff through and through.

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

When you start to bring your awareness to the moments in your life when you're blaming others or reframing your feelings as being caused by someone else, you will start to see how you're giving your power away, how you are embodying your inner child, someone who had little to no power, who was appropriately developmentally dependent on others, who had no emotional skills other than to blame and shame others or yourself when you felt like you were in the wrong and you got scared about it.

And when you give your own adult power over your thoughts away like this, your emotional inner child has a field day with it, runs with it, makes the situation huge and magnifies your challenging feelings because that's what kids do. They have temper tantrums, little fits, throw themselves on the floor screaming and crying.

And while you may not throw yourself on the floor in the middle of a conference room when you feel like someone's being aggressive with you, you may have likely found yourself raising your voice or getting all out of pocket over something that doesn't warrant it. We all have. We've all thrown the bird at people driving in traffic when they've done something we don't like or think is rude or dangerous.

Kids don't know how to manage their minds to choose a thought that serves the way they want to feel because they don't know how and they don't realize that we take action because of what we are feeling, thus creating the outcomes we experience in this one beautiful life. By taking responsibility for your own feelings, you can backtrack and connect with the thoughts that led to those feelings.

When you're in emotional childhood, you blame others for how you're feeling and blame yourself for how other people feel or react to you, which leaves you no way to shift your thoughts if they're not about you. That is the thought, "He made me sad when he said that," or, "I felt so sad and, like, so

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

bad about myself when he ghosted after that third date.” It takes you right out of the equation.

If he caused your feelings, where is your agency, my beauty? Where is your power? Oh, that’s right, you handed it to that dude, the guy who made you feel sad. Someone in fully embodied emotional adulthood faced with the same situation might have those first initial thoughts because those are human, those are preprogrammed, those are habitual. But you can take a deep breath, center yourself, and choose to think something like, “Dude didn’t call after that date because he didn’t want to and that has everything to do with him and his thoughts and nothing to do with me.”

You might then feel neutral, or even calm and peaceful about the situation instead of blaming dude for how you now have chosen to think and feel about yourself. Doesn’t that feel more peaceful, more calm, self-loving, centered, grounded, more adult? You could also choose to lose your mind in that situation, to go into full emotional childhood and text him 1000 times, DM him, call his cousin, call him out on social media, talk crap about him to anyone who will listen. That’s always available to you, totally, 100% available. But might it not feel better and serve you more to pause. Write down your thoughts and the feelings they’re creating so that you can choose the mature emotionally adult thought.

And I get it, it’s challenging. That’s okay. Things in adult life are challenging. Adulthood is hard. And here’s the thing; you can do hard things. You’ve done them before and you can do them again, truly. And the more you own your own thoughts and feelings, the more you practice being your own watcher and really living into your emotional adulthood, the less things seem to be about you, the less you take things personally, and the easier life feels.

That is building these new habits of stepping into your emotional adulthood, getting some space, some distance from your automatic thoughts, shifting

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

them into a thought that feels better once you've allowed yourself to embody and feel your feelings. That feels hard in the moment. And not taking your power back, that feels hard for a lifetime.

Emotional adults take responsibility for both the challenging feelings, your struggle or your pain, your frustration, your anger, your disappointment, and your joy, your peace, your calm, your groundedness, your agency, your fun, your joie de vivre. You are able to step back, to zoom out to get the big picture and can acknowledge that only you can make you feel anything and you can release your expectations that other people make you happy, make you feel secure, make you feel safe, or anything else.

And this one may be as mind-blowing to you as it has been for me; only you can hurt your own feelings. Only you control your thoughts, and so whatever someone else says doesn't have to hurt or upset you unless you choose to let it. It's like that Eleanor Roosevelt quote, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

And this too is so challenging and I so get that. And it's so easy and tempting and societally approved to feel like the victim, like someone else is to blame when we feel like crap. But the fact – and this is a beautiful thing – is that no one can control the way you feel because no one can control your thoughts.

I'm going to say that one again. When you are in emotional adulthood, you recognize that no one can control the way you feel because no one can control your thoughts. That too is so mind-blowing for me.

What just came to mind was the summer in, like, 1980-something when my mom first sent me to Sleep Away Camp. It was a girl-scout camp in the greatest state in the union, which is obviously Rhode Island. It wasn't a fancy place, let's say it lovingly that way. It had, like really gross stinky latrines and these tents that leaked, but whatever, I was a kid and it was so

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

fun and exciting and super scary because I had never been away from my house or my pet rabbit or my parents. That pet rabbit was my best friend. And yeah, it was like this whole adventure. I think I was, like, 10.

And so I go by Victoria, which is my middle name, but like a good Argentine, my first name is actually Maria, like most of Latin America because Catholicism. Anyway, I've never gone by Maria because people back home don't. My whole family is like, Maria Del Carman, Maria Eugenia, my cousins are Maria Rosario, Maria La Cruz on and on, lots and lots of Marias. Anyway, everyone goes by their middle name.

And for whatever reason – I think it's because it's amazing how colonialism gets in our heads, but I didn't like being called Maria, or even for people to know that Maria was my name and I don't know, I think it was, like, one more thing in addition to, like, having a weird little accent and being a chubby kid and having weird food and wearing weird Argentine clothes in the United States as a little tiny Immigrant. I don't know, it was like this marker of otherness that felt like, whoa, that is making me feel way too other.

So I showed up at summer camp and it's like, I don't know how, but the kids found out that my first name was actually Maria and they started making fun of me and they were singing How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria with this really mean energy and tone, which is how my 10-year-old brain interpreted it. And it hurt my tender little heart so much because I just wanted to make friends and they were being mean and pointing their fingers and singing this song with a mocking tone. Again, these are the interpretations of a 10-year-old.

So I had this amazing counselor and her name was Jen. That's all I remember 30 years later or whatever. And she was deaf but had been born hearing, and I don't remember the story about how she had become deaf, but she was no stranger to being made fun of. And she pulled me aside

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

one day and she was like, “Listen, Vic, here’s the story. Those girls can only make you feel bad if you let them make you feel bad. The next time they start singing and start trying to make fun of you, you just decide for yourself that they can’t make you feel bad and start singing along with them.”

And I remember, like, staring at her being like, “Oh my god, wait, what? I can decide that something won’t make me feel bad?” It was, like, completely mind-blowing. So the next time the girls started singing How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria, I started singing with them and they immediately stopped and looked at me like I had just ruined all the fun, their whole summer was totally ruined because now they didn’t have a little victim, someone to pick on. And in that process, I learned that no one can make me feel bad unless I decide they are doing a thing that makes me feel bad.

Gosh, what an amazing thing to remember in the middle of recording this beautiful podcast for you all. Thank you for the opportunity to remember that story I haven’t thought of in many, many years. So, Jen was in emotional adulthood and I was in emotional childhood, as was developmentally appropriate for my age. And she gave me the gift of recognizing that I could do thought work, that I could control my own mind and thus the way I felt. What a gift.

So, when you move through this world from this place of emotional adulthood, you don’t try to control or manage others. This is what Jen taught me. You don’t get to try to get them to speak or think or act in a specific way. You accept others as they are and recognize that you create your own neutral non-reactive state, your own joy, and you can release your inner child’s desire to attempt to control others, which is a great segue to the flipside of taking on other people’s choices or statements and letting them dictate your feelings is when you tell someone directly what you need and they get mad about it.

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

I think most of us have had that happen and I want to say it clearly; that's not yours to take on. If that person has a negative reaction to you saying, "I need some time to myself today," then that reaction is theirs. Their thoughts create their feelings. You didn't. And taking their reaction on as though you could control their thoughts, that's just plain lousy for you, particularly when you consider the alternative, which is to recognize that no one can make you feel anything.

Your thoughts create your feelings and you can't make anyone else feel anything. Their thoughts create their own feelings. Dude said whatever he said, reacted however he reacted, ghosted after the third date, that's squarely that person's to manage, not yours. You said whatever you said, dude had a reaction, also not yours.

Emotional adults recognize this and live it all day long. Each of us can practice being an adult and can manage our own mind. And like totally, let's pause here for a second. If you recognize that you effed up, own it, take responsibility. That's the name of the game in emotional adulthood; taking full and rigorous honest responsibility for ourselves, our minds, our words, our thoughts. And this whole process of recognizing when we're in emotional adulthood or emotional childhood is exactly that; a process.

And all of this to say, you manage your mind, other people manage theirs, you choose your thoughts that create your feelings, other people choose their thoughts and create their feelings, all of this really leads us to say that emotional adults put ourselves first. And no, I don't think that's selfish. Frankly, it's quite practical and it's deeply self-loving. You can't take care of anyone else until you've taken care of you. It's simple really. And folks socialized as women are taught to put everyone else first always, so I get that this can feel really challenging, like a major shift, especially to the parents out there.

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

Recently, I was coaching with my client Karen and she was telling me all about how she went on vacation with her family and her extended family and came back feeling like crap because she put everyone else first. She didn't do her daily exercise and stretching. She didn't have her morning smoothies. She didn't take the supplements that support her in feeling amazing. She didn't meditate or do breathwork and she came out of this experience super resentful of her family and all of their needs because she chose to put everyone else first.

She wasn't taking responsibility for her own self-care. She was playing mom to a whole room full of adults and children that weren't her own. She wasn't asking for the time and space and help she needed because, quite simply, she didn't think she could. She kept saying, things had to get done, like shopping and cooking and all the details and all the managing. And all of that would have gotten done had she taken an hour in the morning to stretch or run, do breathwork, journal, and generally attend to her adult self first.

Would it have gotten done on everyone else's timetable? Maybe not. And that's okay because everyone else was an adult and could manage to feed themselves and their children on their own.

She also told this story about her cousin, Martha, who never comes downstairs from her room on family vacations before, like, 10am and how wild that felt to her, that Martha would do all of her regular self-care stuff on vacation. And the key thing here was that Karen, my client, had been judging Martha for doing this for years.

Her emotional child was calling Martha selfish and was thus putting up a barrier against taking care of her own self because she feared her own judgment and the judgment of others, which is the stuff of emotional childhood. And the emotional adult puts their own needs first in big and little ways to make sure that their self-care is taken care of in the way they need.

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

Karen also noted that when she was running around taking care of everyone else and putting everyone else first, she felt irritable, snapped at her partner, at her sister, at everyone. She was short-tempered and had a headache and her IBS flared.

Doing the work to attend to our bodies, minds, and spirits in whatever way works for us is the truest healthcare and is step one in health and healing and cannot be skipped over or substituted with a supplement. It just doesn't work, my love. We need to step into emotional adulthood and put our own wellness first.

And finally – and I'll be speaking more about communication in episodes soon to come – when we're in emotional adulthood, we communicate clearly and directly. We are not passive aggressive, indirect, and we do not make jabs. We just say what we want and what we mean and what we need. We say what we're going to do and we do what we said we would for ourselves as well as with others.

And this is how we heal; by keeping promises with ourselves. And I have a whole episode on this concept coming up in about two to three weeks or so, so make sure you're subscribed to the show and that you're on my email list, so you're always the first to know about my latest offerings. Go to victoriaalbina.com to sign on up. I serve up some fierce email, my darlings.

Alright, and with that, my beautiful emotional adults and children, your homework. Two episodes ago, when we introduced the concept of the inner child, your homework was to recognize when your inner bambino came out to play. And last episode, we brought our awareness to when our inner child led us to act as an emotional child, taking things personally, blaming or shaming others or ourselves. And your homework was simply to notice these things; not to do anything about it, just to notice it, to have awareness and curiosity about it.

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

This week, we'll be building on that by noticing the moments when you're in emotional adulthood as well as continuing to notice our inner child and to notice when she directs us into emotional childhood. So when someone cuts you off on the highway or on the sidewalk, do you just breathe through it or flip them off and go into childhood?

When the train is super late and you miss an important appointment, which happened to me recently, do you get all grumpy and grumbly and let the train system ruin your day, or do you take a deep breath and recognize that the train delay has nothing to do with you and it's a thing wildly outside of your control? It's just what happened. And you can choose a neutral thought about it so you can feel calm and peaceful, not all sorts of resentful and ticked off, telling everyone you meet how the train hath done you wrong.

And if you do something you regret or aren't proud of or doesn't feel in alignment, you get to recognize the presence of your inner child in your words or actions. An adult you gets to take ownership and can apologize knowing that you are responsible for your own behavior and that you can name your mistakes without creating a child-like maelstrom of guilt, shame, or blame around it.

You get to bring your awareness to when your inner child is running the show, when you are taking action in word or behavior that you later regret. Instead of abdicating responsibility, you can invite your inner child to play while adult you says, "Oops, I really messed up there. I'm so sorry for my words. I'm so sorry for my behavior." And this process is challenging for sure, but the payoff is magnificent.

This week, I want you to really applaud yourself for the times when something within you might say, "Grumble about this, get grumpy. Let them know they made you feel bad." Then you meet it with love, maybe smile at it, maybe think it, then we'll talk more about specific strategies next

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

episode. But for now, notice that inner child, and take a deep breath, and let yourself flow into emotional adulthood; that place where you blame no one, you shame no one, you guilt no one. You just take responsibility for what you're thinking and how you feel.

And again, this process is challenging for sure, but the payoff is magnificent, not depending on others to make you feel anything at all, not being emotionally or otherwise dependent on someone else, it's so frigging amazing. This is the work. This is how we heal, by turning inward, by checking in, and showing up as our fullest emotional adults to the best of our capacity each and every moment of each and every day.

And when you invariably slip because you're a human and this may all be very new to you, take a deep breath. It's likely not that big of a deal. Reset and make it right, starting with your own self.

Next week, we'll talk all about how to begin to re-parent your inner child so you can feel better in the world, in control of your emotions, by recognizing and shifting the thoughts you choose to actively think. And let me tell you, after years of practicing this – well, apparently I learned this 30 years ago and forgot it for quite a while. Thanks, Jen, from the Girl Scouts of Rhode Island Summer Camp – it feels so darn good; like, so good to know that no one else can make me feel a darn thing, that I'm the only one responsible for my feelings and responses, that I don't just have to react because I'm not a child.

And I can give my inner child so much love when she comes to visit, but I don't have to do what she tells me because I recognize that she's two, or four, or six, or 12 years old and I'm a grown ass woman who gets to work to own every choice she makes, every thought she thinks, every feel she feels. And that, my love, is embodied empowerment and it is not to be missed.

Ep #24: Emotional Adulthood

If you're enjoying this show, my darling, please make sure to subscribe, rate and review on iTunes. And the reason I'm asking for you to do this is because the way iTunes works, if your show doesn't have a lot of ratings and subscribers and reviews, it doesn't show up in search.

And so I really want people in, like, Nebraska and Australia and Scotland and Rhode Island to find the show, but I can't do it on my own. A core concept, a core important thing in feminism as I understand it, as I live it, is community. So it takes all of us to lift each of us up. So take a little moment, do all the things on the iTunes, take a moment to share about the show on your social media, put it in your stories or whatever, share it with your beloved communities.

I'm so grateful for your love and support and for all of the emails and DMs I get from listeners each week. It means the world to me and I want to share this free resource around the world. So let's make it happen.

Thank you so much for tuning in. It is such an immense pleasure, as always, to share all that I've been so privileged to learn with you, from my heart to yours. Be well, take good care of yourself, my darling, and remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved, and when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Take care, my love, and I'll talk to you soon.

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.