

## Ep #45: Why Wishing Is Not Enough



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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How often do you find yourself saying, “I wish things were different?” Have you ever stopped to contemplate the effect of all that wishing thinking on your day-to-day life, how it takes you out of the present, and that wishing becomes the action you’re taking?

I’ve been paying a lot of attention to this language in my own life, my darling. And it’s so pervasive. And boy, can it steal your energy. If you’re ready to stop living in Wishland and to take your rightful place in Get-It-Doneville, then keep listening, my love, it’s going to be a good one.

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. If you’re listening to this podcast the day it came out, it’s December 26<sup>th</sup>, the day after Christmas, the fourth night of Hanukkah, mere days before New Years, and you may be spending time with your family of origin, a partner’s family, maybe you’re with friends, chosen family, or maybe you’re on your own this holiday time.

Regardless of the company you’re keeping, your brain may be indulging in an old thought habit; wishing that something you have no power to change is different than it is. For example, I’m coming to you from the frozen tundra that is currently New York City. Like, it’s insanely blustery and snowy and so effing cold out. And I found myself, just the other day, mumbling about how I wish it was warmer, wish I lived somewhere that didn’t try to kill me year-round.

I love New York City, but let’s be real, it’s survival of the fittest around here, for sure. Anyway, I found myself awash in wishing, but not doing any actual

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Zillow searches for houses in Joshua Tree or Costa Rica, you know what I mean? I was just spinning in wishing. And that's our topic for today; the uselessness of wishing life were different versus owning what is, accepting it, and taking action.

So, if you're sitting at home for the holidays, these stories may sound something like, "I wish my parents were more accepting of me," or, "I wish she wasn't so argumentative. I wish he didn't drink so much. I wish she would just stop projecting her codependent thinking onto me."

Whatever's going on for you, whatever you're wishing was different, I want to let you in on a fact that I know will change your life, and that is that life happens. And often, the only thing you can change or affect is your own reaction to it. The circumstance in which you find yourself is never the cause of your feelings; feelings being the signal from your brain to your body, your thoughts about that circumstance, that's what leads to your feelings.

And I know it can feel challenging to take in, but it's been one of the most liberating lessons of my life. I am only responsible for me and can choose the feelings I want to have by choosing my thoughts. Likewise, you are only responsible for you and each of us is responsible for our own reactions, responses, and decisions in this life.

And we can apply this framework to making it through holiday gatherings, as well as to dating, relationships, work meetings while we're at it, making it through all of that with your heart and spirit and sanity intact. One important step is to bring your awareness to times when you're more focused on wishing things were different than you are in accepting what is. And thus, setting yourself up to take action if you want things to be different when and where that's possible, knowing that we cannot change other people, places, or things. We can only change ourselves.

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This framework applies to political and social justice situations too, which is not like specifically today's focus, but the show is called *Feminist Wellness*, and feminism, for me, is all about intersectionality and collective healing, so I'll just say that when you're in wishing it was different mode about the upsetting things that are going on in this country and the world and human history, you're not able to take action.

If you're a dedicated listener, I sure hope you are, then you guessed it, my love; when you're wishing things were different, it's the thought you're having and it's the action you're taking. Which means, while you're busy wishing, you're not out there rabbleroxing. You're not getting petitions signed or organizing a lobbying day or raising money for folks who do good work. You are wishing about it. And that gets zero immigrant babies out of cages, that protects zero acres of forestland, that gets zero shelters or housing units built for folks without indoor housing, protects zero people left behind by our current political system. Wishing is all you're doing when you're doing it, regardless of the context.

Okay, so as always, I'm talking about this topic because I do it too. And when I was thinking about this too – gosh, I thought of a lot of occasions – but I thought of one that came from this last summer. So, my partner and I met my parents, my sister, and her family in Maine for a weeklong family vacation, which is something we haven't done all together in years, like years and years.

So, my sister and her people had longstanding plans that meant we all only overlapped for two days. I heard myself in the car after our first really fun day together saying to my partner, "I wish my sister and the babies could have stayed longer." And that thought made me feel sad; longing, grasping in the Buddhist sense, and not accepting what is, not focused on enjoying the moment, the time together, the joy of playing in the sand and the sun, playing tag with three-year-old Matteo, listening to six-year-old Santiago tell

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me all about different science facts. Man, no one knows more about dinosaurs than a six-year-old, it's, like, stunning.

And I'm so grateful for the thought work and the breathwork that I do on the daily because I was able to hear myself in that moment and to recognize what I was doing; creating pain and suffering for myself over something so outside my control. And I used to play this game pretty much every holiday.

As immigrant here in the US, we don't have any family to spend the holidays with. And I remember countless years of feeling like a sad-sack thinking, "I wish we had an extended family like all the other kids." And back to a focus on the holidays and the gathering of families, I want to name and acknowledge that for folks that grew up with alcoholism, addiction, narcissism, codependency, on and on, folks who are working on their own recovery, their own healing, it's so easy to get home to our families of origin and to sink into those thoughts, "I wish these people were different. I wish I had been raised by actual wolves, instead of these human wolf equivalents, because then at least I would have learned some valuable life skills like hunting small prey and knowing which berries are poisonous."

I get it, deeply. I've done all of it so much and I want to testify, the less wishing I do about life on life's terms and the more I accept the reality before me, the better I feel; promise. And as always, normalizing is so helpful. Let me say it, my babies; this habit is so pervasive. And we often make these I-wish statements, cousins of worry thoughts, which we talked about the last two weeks, about something from the past, about nature, like the weather, or about another animal – generally humans, or cats. I mean, I love them, but they're jerks, let's be real – and their life choices.

And our response is, "I wish he had been nicer. I wish I hadn't been a parentified child. I would know how to relax instead of being always on edge. I wish my parents hadn't been so negative about my body, then I would feel better about myself."

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And these examples exemplify the complexity and the potential harm that come with this kind of thinking, which is, one, you are pinning your current emotional state on something you cannot change. And two, in some cases, this I-wish thinking pins how you think and feel about yourself on something from the past, or another person's choices or their thoughts about you. Three, this I-wish thinking obviates your personal responsibility, making it pretty much near impossible to see how you got where you're at.

So, how can you change it, for the now and for the future, if you're not sure how you got into this mess in the first place? My love, this is all very disempowering. So let's play it out and talk about how to do it differently.

So, let's look at an example. The statement, "I wish we had left earlier, then we wouldn't be late," may be a coverup or a buffer for, "I am feeling anxious or guilty that we're running late, and instead of just owning and feeling that, I'm making an I-wish statement."

Or, "I wish I had done this work before we left so I could enjoy our vacation," read, "I'm blaming my past self for my inability to change my thoughts and feelings now. In the future I can choose to calendar my time better and learn to buffer or procrastinate less and I can give myself loving permission to relax now, regardless of what I did or didn't do last week, because the last is past and, right now, I'm on vacation."

Another statement may be, "I wish he didn't drink so much," which may be covering up, "I'm starting to recognize the harmful effects of growing up with an alcoholic, and it's painful to look at." See how insidious and sneaky this language is, my love? I hope you're starting to see how these statements keep you trapped, rolling around in the past and things you cannot control or change, and how these thoughts keep your emotional state dependent on someone else, which is not something I ever want for you, you perfect and amazing animal.

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These wishing statements, I want to be clear that they are not a positive affirmation or a manifestation statement. I love an affirmation. I love a mantra. I love manifesting. But this ain't that. These, "I wish this was different, I wish the past was different," is just indulgently rolling around in lousy feelings, expecting the lousier you make yourself feel will change something. And really, babe, it can keep you out of personal responsibility.

So, my life coaching clients often go for statements like, "Well, I wish I had more hours in the day," or, "I wish I had a magic wand to get this project done," or the perennial favorite, "I wish I wasn't so overwhelmed." Instead of saying, "I recognize that I spent two hours today buffering against feeling my feelings of worry or insecurity about this deadline at work by checking Instagram like 1000 times, watching Netflix, exercising..." insert your own personal buffer here, "So I didn't make the headway I planned to make on this project and I'm disappointed in myself. Instead of beating myself up for something I did or didn't do, I will find a way to be gentle about what already is, accept that it's done, and will plan my time in a way that serves me more for tomorrow. I will make a promise to myself and I will keep it."

Do you see how the first story, "I wish I had more hours, I wish I wasn't so overwhelmed," that keeps you blaming something or someone else versus the second idea of recognizing what actually happened and taking ownership over your life and your reaction to life on life's terms? Instead, you can take action to make your own life better. You don't just have to wish about it, my darling.

And another things I'll go ahead and own from my own history, because why not, is that looking back to my 20s, I can see now that I engaged in this kind of I-wish storytelling as an attempt to manipulate others because I didn't know how to communicate my wants and needs and feelings directly and without complete BS. I didn't know how to make a codependence-free statement.



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Instead of saying, “Hey, next time you’re running late, would you please send me a text or call me and let me know?” I would stand outside my apartment building waiting for a friend who was running late for like 20 minutes, 30 minutes. And when they got there, I’d say stuff like, “I wish we could have made it to the movie. I mean, this was the last night and I was really looking forward to it. I really wish I could have seen it, but I was waiting here for you to pick me up.”

It honestly makes me laugh in, like, not a self-deprecating or mean to me way, but just in a, like, “Eurgh, brains,” kind of way. I mean, what, Vic, you didn’t know how to take the bus? I mean, it’s so funny, right? My brain would set up these situations where I was victim to someone else, like not showing up, not getting something done, instead of, like, calling them in or out about it, instead of, like, talking about it like adults.

“I wish you were staying longer. It’s such a bummer you guys have to leave. I wish you could have made it work.” I’d say stuff like that versus just, like, accepting that I’m feeling sad because something is ending and it’s totally normal, totally okay and human to feel sad about an ending, to feel it, process sit through your body, and to then see about working the thought protocol on it to change the thought leading to the feeling. Oh, brains.

Dwelling in I-wish statements also robs you of the joy of the present moment and the opportunity to practice accepting the facts of what is, keeps you from cultivating gratitude for what’s possible, which is to enjoy the present moment as fully as any human can.

And, my darling, why would you rob yourself of any opportunity to feel true real joy? Don’t waste your time wishing the vacation was longer. Enjoy the day you’re having. Don’t wish you had more of something delicious. Enjoy the something delicious you have. It’s so simple and so rewarding to live in this present reality.



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So, my darling, whatever your family of origin is like, wherever you find yourself this holiday season, bring your attention to those sneaky little I-wish statements. And ask yourself what you're really doing when you're thinking or saying that you wish the current moment was different. When I'm doing it, I'm attempting to avoid or deny a reality I don't want to accept.

I'm buffering against sad or disappointed or angry, and I'm keeping myself from feeling all my beautiful feels, which keeps my body and yours from feeling the profound safety and peace that comes from knowing that the worst-case scenario in pretty much any situation is feeling a feeling. And you can feel all your feels. I know you have that strength within you to feel it all and to work through it, and eventually, in your own time, to do the thought work protocol, circumstance, thought, feeling, action, result, to pick a thought more aligned with how you want to feel.

When you stop wishing and you start accepting reality as is, life on life's terms, you can then start to take courageous action to manage your mind and to make your world and the whole wide world a better place one loving action at a time.

Your homework for this week, my darlings, as we head into this new decade is to try this out. Bring your awareness to those sneaky little I-wish statements. And as you spot them, give yourself some love, some gentleness. No need to be mean to you. Can't heal hurt with more hurt. So be sweet.

Just recognize it. Honor the part of you that thinks that this is a really smart way to protect you. And when you notice those statements, I want to invite you to post about it on the Instagrams or Facebook, and tag me there. I love to celebrate you, to witness your growth and collective healing is so vital. So I encourage you to share about your realizations, your awareness, your wins, your awesome and magnificent failures.

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I'm inspired by the stories you share, and so are others. So please, keep sharing them. Make sure to tag me so that, you know, my attention is drawn to there and I can give you some love and a reshare and a little shout-out. Though, I think if you have a private Instagram, then you can't do that. You're smart. We'll all figure it out, right?

My love, please share and know that I'd love to keep sharing with you. So make sure you're on my email list so we can stay in touch. Doesn't that sound delightful? I'm also planning to do some listener Q&A episodes in 2020, which I'm really excited about. I've got about a dozen questions already through DMs on Instagram, and I'd love to invite you to drop me a line at [podcast@victoriaalbina.com](mailto:podcast@victoriaalbina.com) to share your thoughts, your feels, requests for a specific topic to be covered, to get your question on the list for the upcoming Q&A, and that's it.

Oh, I almost forgot, I created a freebie for you. It's so funny, I spent so much time on this thing and it's so good. I had a couple of friends who are also breathwork facilitators listen to it and they all really loved it. So, it's a 13-minute breathwork journey meditation session and it's free. And it's just for you.

Happy holidays, happy solstice, happy new year. I love giving presents. So, got to my website, [victoriaalbina.com/breathworkgift](http://victoriaalbina.com/breathworkgift), it's a present, it's for you. I'm excited for you to download it, listen to it do the practice, do a little screenshot of it, post it, and let's all celebrate and encourage each other. Doesn't that sound so nice, to go into 2020 encouraging and supporting each other?

Alright, my loves, let's take a big deep breath in through the nose, and out through your mouth. Remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved, and when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my darlings, talk to you in 2020.

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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](http://VictoriaAlbina.com) to learn more.