

## Ep #47: Goals and New Year's Resolutions



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Who amongst us hasn't set some lofty goals on January 1st, only to find that we've slipped into our old habits by mid-March or sooner? Apparently, all the cute gym clothes and good intentions in the world aren't enough to transform us from someone who hits the snooze button seven times each morning into someone who leaps out of bed and hits the gym daily.

So what does work? How can you set and meet goals that will bring you better health, and perhaps more happiness? Keep listening my love, as I dive on in with actionable steps and lots of questions to get you thinking.

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. Welcome to 2020. A new year, a new decade. We're a week in. How is it going? I spent New Year's in upstate New York, in nature, taking lots of long walks and runs in the woods, eating amazing food, relaxing by the fire, and oh my god, I am so proud of myself for my fire making skills. It's the little things, right?

I love New York City, and it's so great to step back, get some more nature in my life, some clean air, get some perspective when one has the privilege to do such things. I'm going to talk to you all about New Year's resolutions and goals and all of that, and I wanted to share an interesting story from last night.

So we're staying at a friend's huge old house. It used to be an inn, it's enormous. And it's a woodland area in upstate New York, and there aren't

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a lot of people around because you know, it's not New York City. And my partner was here with me for the last week and left to go back to work last night, and it was so fascinating to watch my brain as I was lying in bed.

So it's an old house so it creaks and cracks and moans, and there's cars going by and there's animals making animal noises outside, and my brain got so worried, in a way I don't get when I'm at home alone in New York City, which happens when my partner travels or whatever. It was fascinating.

I was lying in bed in this really beautiful room. My brain was like, what's that noise? Who is it? Is that a car in the drive? What is it? And my brain started spinning in all the ways. These sounds meant my certain, absolute, 100% death and doom. My brain was like, I heard a creak, it must mean the axe murderers are here.

And of course, the axe murderers weren't here. The doors were locked, windows were locked, alarm was set, these folks have cameras all over the place. Everything was fine. But my brain did a thing that brains do, which was to revert back to an old pattern of thinking. A pattern of worrying.

And this is something I talked about recently on the podcast back a couple of episodes. So if worrying is a thing that is popular in your brain, when you're done with this episode, go back and listen to those because it was really interesting to watch my brain spin and spin. And eventually, I was like, hold on. You know what to do here.

So I did what I do. I fact-ed it out. I'm hearing noises. I'm in an old house. I'm in the country. I know this house creaks all night long. It is unlikely, statistically speaking, that there are axe murderers coming to get me in the night and honestly, I'm a relatively small mammal. I did everything I could to be safe.

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I left lights on, again, the alarm was on, all I can do is either lie here in this cozy bed not sleeping, spending my time and energy worrying, which as we know, does nothing, it's the action you're taking when you're doing it. The action I wanted to take was a nice REM cycle. And instead, I was there worrying.

And so I also got to do what I recommend you do, which is to worst-case-scenario it. So worst case scenario, the axe murderers were indeed here and were coming to get me and then I was going to get axe murdered. What am I going to do about it, right? What would lying in bed with the doors locked, the alarm on, the little cameras flashing, every window locked, what would lying in bed do to prevent axe murderation?

Nothing. So the worst-case scenario is someone would break in, axe murder me, dead. Well, then I would be dead. I am a hospice nurse. It doesn't sound like, that bad, a possible outcome. Hopefully they would kill me quickly and I wouldn't suffer too much, but that's also a thing outside of my control.

So not sleeping is also a thing that will eventually make me have an earlier death. Studies are very clear on that. So it was this really interesting moment where I got to worst-case-scenario it, to do the things that I recommend that you do and to see the worst case scenario isn't that bad, and it isn't a thing that I can actually control beyond the reasonable thoughtful actions that I had already taken to do my best to ensure my safety.

So I had a sweet little talk with myself. I talked to my inner child who was really freaked out and scared, and decided together that I would be my own best parent and I would just say, "Baby girl, it's time for sleep. Put your little earplugs in and go to sleep. Stop hearing the creaks. Stop hearing the building moan and settle. There's nothing more you can do. There's no

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reason to keep yourself up. Go to sleep. And if you wake up in the morning, that's fabulous. And if you don't, that's what happened."

My staying up worrying about it would do nothing to change any possible scary worst-case scenario, so I took the scary out of it. So that was my night. And here I am in this beautiful big house, looking over a creek and all of these trees, and I had planned to do a show about New Year's resolutions.

But the thing is I don't do resolutions because resolutions don't work unless we do the thought work to make sure we're coming to them from a realistic place. They're often just these wild and unachievable statements we make about the things we wish we would start doing on this arbitrary date.

What I've learned in the last many years as a life coach and healthcare provider is that these statements, these resolutions just end up being one more thing to beat yourself up about not doing. Know what I mean? Statements like, I'm going to go to the gym for an hour every day, when you haven't exercised in ages. Or I'm going to eat 110% paleo, when you're nomming gluten on the daily, which I'm not judging that. I'm just saying, stark contrast.

Or I'm going to conquer this super long to-do list of tasks with no distractions every single day, when your phone is still constantly buzzing with alerts and you're not setting aside dedicated time to work on the things you want and need to work on. This, my darling, is a slippery slope to self-blame, self-judgment, and repeating the same emotionally harmful behaviors and thought patterns that have kept you feeling stuck and spinning your wheels.

I'm here to help support you in living a truly intentional life. A life where you're aware of your inner scripts from childhood, those old self-defeating

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patterns, and to show you how to change the way you think, to manage your mind, to bid those old thoughts adieu. Not to erase them because well, that's not possible. That's not how brains work.

But to change your relationship to them so they don't have the same power. They're just thoughts you used to think. I love intention setting, and more than anything, I love getting aligned and thus committed to what you want for your life, and to set yourself up for success, and of course, thoughtful, loving failure.

Resolutions aren't bad, per se. But I'd rather you set commitments. Figure out why you aren't doing a thing, or why you're doing a thing you'd like to stop doing, and then get clear on why you want to do or not do it. Today, we'll be talking about the barriers to making change, and next week, about what it means to commit to your why and how to do that.

According to US news and world report, the failure rate, and they mean failure in the bad way, not how we talk about it, but failure like not getting things done and not learning from it, for New Year's resolutions is said to be about 80%. And most folks stop their resolution by about mid-February.

So since you get to choose your thoughts, you could roll around in all of this being a terrible statistic, or you could see that it's great news because it's an invitation to do things really differently this year, and I'm hoping you're choosing the latter, my love. Because why not?

And as always, my darling, statistics aside, I've got great news. You absolutely can set and meet your goals, and it's going to take some mind shifts and practice and dedication to do it. I've done it and I've seen my clients do it time and time again.

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It isn't magic, but it does require understanding how brains work and a deeper exploration of your motivations and barriers to change. It also requires writing a new story of success and my old favorite, failure. If you haven't listened to episodes 39 and 40 all about my beloved failure, you're going to want to.

And while you're at it, episodes 35 to 38 all about the think-feel-act cycle and courageous action would be very smart to listen to before setting those lofty goals. So set aside a bit of time, put it on your calendar and get to it. They're so good.

So my sweet one, before you start beating yourself up for one more minute about that New Year's resolution that you didn't do last year or the year before or you think you might not actually achieve this year either, let's walk through some steps that can put you on the road to success and loving failure.

So the first thing I recommend is to get really clear on your internal barriers to change. Here, I'm using the term barrier to mean the stories we tell ourselves about why we can't do something. If you struggle to make change in the past, they're good reasons. Your habits are not only deeply ingrained, they're serving you somehow.

Our barriers to change are often linked to stories about our very survival, from an evolutionary standpoint that is. Until you understand those stories and the emotions that come with them, like fear, worry, concern, and approach them with some compassion, gentleness, and wild amounts of self-love, change can feel really, really hard. But that's just a thought, right?

Let me give you an example. Maybe your goal is to go to the gym more often or to exercise in some other way. Perhaps you've tried in the past and failed and again, I'm going to be using the word failure in the sense of the

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thing you said you would do but didn't. And your brain encoded it as very bad and evidence of danger.

So if you've tried to go to the gym or exercise in some way in the past and failed to meet that goal, it's likely your brain has linked going to the gym with failure in the very bad sense. So nerd alert, our brains have a structure called the habenula, which is designed to help us remember our failures so we don't repeat them.

The habenula was super handy when we were gathering nuts and berries in order to survive and we needed to remember which ones were poisonous, or when we needed to remember exactly where the lions lived so we could reduce the chances of, well, dying. But they can be a real pain in the butt in modern times when being reminded of our failures even on that unconscious level just gets in the way.

Because of the habenula, your brain is wired to say don't go to the gym, therein lies failure and certain doom. Some barriers may seem more real than others, but almost all of them can be overcome with some effort, creativity, and you guessed it, thought work.

In my work with clients, the most common barriers to making change that I hear are I feel overwhelmed, it's too much at once, I have way too many other obligations or demands on my time, it's too complicated. If I do X, I won't fit in. My friends or partner will object. For example, if I stop drinking or stop eating gluten or if I start going to the gym or yoga on a Saturday morning.

Brains also love to feed us things like well, I don't know how, or ugh, I hate it, or it is the gym, eating vegetables, going to bed earlier, turning notifications off on your phone, and another one that I've talked about in



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some detail on the podcast, I'm not the kind of person who, fill in the blank. Does yoga, eats healthy, takes supplements.

You may experience other barriers as well. Maybe you think going to the gym is frivolous or self-indulgent. Maybe you're worried you won't do it right or that you'll look silly. Or you have some goal around strength building or a shift in your weight and you're worried. You're worried that you've tried this exercise thing before and it didn't give you the outcome you wanted, and so your brain is screaming, don't do it.

What I want to invite you to do is to spend some time thinking about and writing down all the messages in your brain about why you think you can't do the thing. Sometimes identifying these stories on your own is hard, and so you may want the help of a trained life coach, such as moi.

Once you identify the barriers to change, it's time to do some thought work on these statements that are keeping you stuck as a way to let your habenula and your amygdala - pardon me, nerd alert. Another science word. Your amygdala, which has two parts and is thought to be part of the limbic system within the brain and is an area responsible for emotions, survival instincts, memory.

These two parts of your brain need to know that you're safe, that you're okay, that you're being very thoughtful about all of this change making. This is a time to bring in gentleness, self-love, and a connection with your perfect inner child who is likely running the show when your unconscious mind is objecting hard to changes your conscious mind wants to make.

So take a deep slow breath in and out, check in with your body. Bring your awareness to any tightness, any tension, just notice it. Really looking at these stories can be challenging at first, but as always, you can't change

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what you can't see. And of course, when you can do hard things, right, my love?

All these barriers are just stories. Just thoughts in your brain. It feels harsh to call them lies, but I mean, they are, in that they aren't true. It's not a fact that you feel overwhelmed when you look at all the things you want to accomplish. You feel overwhelmed when you have the thought, "This is overwhelming," and that leads to sensations in your body.

It's not a fact that you don't have the time to do these things. That again is just a thought in your mind, likely leading to tension in your body. It may be a fact that you're overcommitted or over-scheduled yourself, but it's not that you have any less than 24 hours in a day. You may just need to look at the things you're prioritizing, spending time on, like obsessing about how little time you have or scrolling Instagram, versus the time that you are spending taking courageous action.

And yes, of course, we need to recognize privilege in all of this. A lot of people on this planet work two or even three jobs. That's not the scenario I'm talking about here and regardless of what your actual 24 hour looks like, maybe you set a goal like taking five deep breaths a day and that's something anyone can fit into their schedule.

It's also not a fact that you're not the kind of person who does or doesn't do anything. Those are just old stories and you strengthen your neural connection to them every time you think and believe them. Remember, a belief is just a thought you've actively thought again and again and again. Beliefs aren't true or real. They're just thoughts on repeat. Old cassette tapes in your monkey mind, right, my love?

And if you choose to believe those thoughts, to repeat them versus question them, then they stay barriers. They continue to get between you

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and creating the feeling that will lead you to take the action you want to take to get the outcome you dream of.

And listen, if I sat down to a list of 473 tasks every day, I'd feel overwhelmed at first too. That's normal and to be expected. So consider not doing that to yourself. Take a step back and break it down. Get realistic. Maybe you can do four things from your list in one day. That's great. It's so much better to recognize your actual capacity as a human, to accept the limitations of only having 24 hours in a day, and to align your thoughts to be I can do these four things today, and then that feeling that that creates may be neutral.

Maybe it doesn't make you feel much. It's just a statement of the fact. I can do these four things today. Or maybe you feel peaceful. Maybe you feel motivated. And on the note of motivation, it's one of the things I get a ton of emails and DMs about so I'll be talking about that soon.

But for now, take another deep breath and get realistic. Four things. I can do four things today. I have time and energy to do four things today. I love myself enough to carve out 30 minutes of exercise today. It's my job to take care of myself first. These are some thoughts that may be helpful for you to practice, and they embody the shift I recommend.

Committing to what's possible and framing it as active empowered self-love. Not as a way to remediate some negative story you've been telling about how inadequate you are. See the difference there, my love? I like to think about the hours in a day and my energy as a human as a known quantity.

And sure, there are days that we all have more or less energy, more and fewer commitments, days when the cat barfs on a rug or a kid is sick. And your energy gets pulled elsewhere, totally. But let's focus on any given

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Wednesday. So you have your normal amount of energy and the day has 24 hours.

You have two options. You can roll around in the thoughts about how you're not going to get enough things done, spending time and emotional energy on worry, stress, anxiety, thoughts like there's too much on my plate, I'm so overwhelmed. Or you can literally just start. Just write down four things on your calendar, four goals you're going to accomplish. Commit to them without distractions, without ruminating about the things you're not getting done, and get to work.

Start small and start with your thoughts. Practice, I can do these four things today, and I'm committed to them. I'm committed to taking courageous action for my own life. And if your barriers to change are about other people, I want to remind you, you live your life for you.

Yes, we all have obligations, things we've agreed to do for others, families, partners, jobs, and once again, if the hours and energy available in one human day are a finite thing, do you want to spend that emotional currency worrying about what someone else will think about your choices? Or do you want to make change for you? For your one life?

And yes, be a kind, loving, thoughtful, gentle person with yourself and others. But not exercising on a Saturday morning because your partner won't like it that you're out of the house for an hour, babe, please, don't betray yourself like that. That is a recipe for resentment and discord. Trust me. I did it for years.

So making change, resolutions, barriers. I want to invite you to start by looking at the barrier thoughts you're putting between yourself and making the changes you want in your life. Write them down. Look at them. Ask yourself, is this a fact or a thought? It's usually the latter. A thought mixed

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with some facts that you can likely overcome once you've aligned your thoughts with how you want to feel.

For example, and it's like, a silly example, but brains often understand the silly ones better than like, the profound. If you want to make coffee, it's a fact that you have to have access to fire, water - I guess you could make cold brew. Maybe you don't even need the fire. Great. You need to have access to water, coffee beans, and some way to grind them.

If you have none of those things, those are facts in this moment, but making coffee isn't some unattainable thing just for other people. Those with like, fire and water and beans. And the story, I'm doomed, I can never make coffee, that's not a fact. It's a thought. You can find your way to a store, rub two sticks together to make fire. Go for the cold brew. You see where I'm going?

You can make coffee, my love. I know you can. And I also know that you can replace the word coffee with any goal that you want. Meanwhile, we get to remember that brains love to feed us I-don't-know-how stories as a way to keep us from doing something our habenula fears, like setting boundaries with a parent, going to grad school, dating without codependency, or exercising.

It may be true that you don't know how to do something you've never done or have never done in a new, healthier way, but that's what life is. Learning how to do a series of things that scare us. Things that are new. Remember, you always have the option to spend your time on I-don't-know-how stories and you can let it eat up hours, days, weeks, months of your life.

Or you can decide that you'll spend a set amount of time, and do put a limit on it, or your brain will implore you to spend a week straight on YouTube learning how to do a thing. And then you just do it. You commit to it. Align

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your thoughts with the feeling you want to have to drive courageous action and you do it.

And sometimes it's challenging to align our thoughts, feelings, and our action, and it's okay to recognize that your brain is saying, "But I'm scared to ask for help. I'm scared to do this differently." And you can give your brain love and care it needs, talk to it gently and sweetly, and remind it, it's okay to feel scared. It's okay to feel worried. And to do the thing anyway.

And hey, you might fail. You might try to do the thing, you may take courageous action and fail, and that's great. Write down exactly how you failed so you can learn from it. Remembering always to be gentle, loving, and firm with yourself.

To recap, our process to making change is recognize the barrier stories, fact it out, asking is this a thought or a fact? Do the thought work to look at the feelings, actions, and outcomes your current thoughts are creating for you. Feel all the feels about it and then set your goal, commit to it, align your thoughts and feelings around the new action you want to take, and then, my love, take action.

Small steps, small steps, small steps. Fail or succeed, do it all over and do it again and again and again until you've reached your goal. And above all, don't beat yourself up. You are where you are. You had the childhood you had. You have the history, the traumas, the past that you have. All of that lives inside you.

And while you can recognize and own it all, none of it needs to be a lasting barrier to change. Go slowly, be thoughtful, do the work, and instead of making thoughtless resolutions, pick smart, achievable goals and commit to them. Recognizing the barrier stories you're carrying around and shifting them for your own good.

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Okay my darlings, that's it for me today. I have so much faith in you. I know you can build the life of your dreams one little thought work step at a time. Remember, your habenula will feed you old stories about how you'll fail and that's terrible. That's okay.

Mine fed me stories about how I was going to axe murdered last night, and tonight I will lock all the doors, set the alarm, make sure the cameras are on, the windows are closed, and I will put those earplugs in pretty quick and get to sleep because I can recognize and meet my brain and see it spinning old stories and make a decision to live my best life. Meeting it with love and consciously, thoughtfully choosing a new story.

This is how you build an intentional life. You got this. And if you want more support, let's work together. I'm here for you and I have room for two more life coaching clients before launching my big online coaching program so soon. I'm so excited about it and yeah, we've got some travel coming up in the spring so I'm figuring out the dates around when we're going to various locals.

So if you're interested in doing life coaching with me one-on-one, or if you want to learn more about my upcoming program, it's going to be a six-month life coaching program, small group, very exciting. Or if you're here in New York City and want to do breath work meditation with me, I should do a podcast about that. Putting it on the list as we speak.

Or if you're not in New York City and you want to check out breath work journey meditation, I have an online course, which is pretty cool because you can do it from the comfort of your own home, which is really, really sweet. It's just a nice way to do it, lying in your own bed.

So if you're interested in any of that, drop me a line, [podcast@victoriaalbina.com](mailto:podcast@victoriaalbina.com) and so we can talk about how to work together

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to get you ever closer to living life with intention, dropping the stress, the overwhelm, and making your dreams come true. So remember my love, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. See you next time and be well.

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.