

## Ep #64: Letting Go of Resentment



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Resentment is a powerful siren song. For a moment when you feel hurt, it feels so good to blame someone else for how you feel, to tear them down, defending yourself. “She’s a monster,” you mutter under your breath. “She’s the worst.” But the thing about sirens is that they only lead your ship to crash on the rocks.

Here, the certain doom of resentment lies in the blame, shame, guilt, and defensiveness that this thought habit breeds in your tender heart, keeping you from feeling powerful in your life. Always the subject of someone else’s decisions, choices, stories, actions. And always seething in resentment about it.

That’s now how I want you to live, my love. Another way is possible. Does a life with less resentment sound like a beautiful thing? Sure has been in my life. 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. So this episode comes out on May 7th 2020, during the time of the COVID pandemic, and May 3rd marks two months since I have actually really left my house. I went into quarantine early, thanks to some dear friends at CDC and IH who told me, “Don’t leave the house. Cancel breathwork.”

And it’s been fascinating to be in my home for two months. I am so fortunate that I live indoors. Let’s just start there. And that I have a great

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partner, thanks to all that work that I've done for many years on myself on relationships and codependency and perfectionism, and we also have a roof deck, which has been just amazing to be able to go outside, get a little fresh air.

Where we live in Brooklyn, it does not feel like a wise idea to go out for a walk, so we are going to the roof, doing exercise up there. I love it at 7pm every night when the whole town claps. My neighbors have been blaring - someone's been playing New York, New York every night or most nights, and it's just been so much fun and banging on pots and pans, which as a South American is one of my favorite activities ever.

My people live for a cacerola so a good protest where you're banging on pots and pans. So yeah, you know, we're getting by, right? Just living through the rollercoaster of it all. Getting present as best I can and connecting in with the people I love.

And one of the things that's been coming up for so many of my clients and my loved ones who are at home 24/7 is resentment. So let's talk about it because it's a big deal. And if you're like most of us humans who are moving through life with codependency and/or perfectionism, you are no stranger to resentment.

Many of us get resentful and then hold onto that resentment for dear life. Sometimes resentment makes us feel temporarily powerful, superior, virtuous. It can admittedly have a certain allure, to feel like the person who knows the right thing and the wrong thing to do, to hold onto that grudge for dear life.

But unfortunately or fortunately rather, resentment accomplishes nothing and only leads to more stress and angst and upset-ness in your own life, which my darling nerds, you know that tension leads to more anxiety,

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physiologically speaking. More of the sympathetic fight or flight energy, and when that system gets exhausted, more of that dorsal vagal collapse.

And if you're new to the show or you're new to polyvagal theory, please check out episodes 61 where I nerd out so hard all about it. My beauty, when you are awash in resentment, holding a grudge, it usually means you're avoiding the real issues that need tending to.

It usually means that you're buffering. And when unresolved, resentment and the issues beneath it can really damage our relationships. With others and most importantly, with yourself. Choosing resentment is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. I'd go so far as to say that holding onto resentment is one of the most harmful things you can do to yourself and those you love.

And yes, being resentful is both a feeling and an action. So let's start with an example. I was talking recently with my client, Hilda, who is in the midst of the resentment spiral in her own mind. Over the last few weeks of quarantine, she and her partner, Tarin, have gotten into the habit of calling Hilda's parents with their two-year-old on Saturday mornings.

Life happened last week and they didn't make the usual FaceTime call to Hilda's parents, which, I mean, this is just to give you context. It's not actually relevant to whether having resentment was correct or right. But this wasn't like, a set plan. There was nothing on anyone's calendar. It was just something they were casually doing and they had happened to do it three weeks in a row.

So they didn't make the call and Hilda's mom wrote her on Monday saying she was seething, furious, so upset. She had sat around all day Saturday waiting for the FaceTime call, expecting to see her granddaughter, and she was really upset and angry.

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She used the word resentful. Hilda's first reaction was, "See? This is why I don't give her an inch. She demands a mile. Forget this. I'm not putting up with this. I'm not calling her with the baby anymore. This Saturday thing is over. Forget it."

Here, both Hilda and her mom were stuck in a resentment loop. Both hurt, both feeling disrespected, unseen, upset, both feeling resentment, which is not the energy that Hilda wants to bring to her connection with her mom. So let's define terms, my darling nerds. What is resentment?

Resentment is what can happen when you feel that you have been wronged in some way. When the story goes that someone else did something to you and you're holding a grudge about it. The feeling of resentment can often carry shame, annoyance, irritation, as well as anger, and can also bring with it that hallmark of the grudge. The desire for revenge.

To make someone else feel as bad as they made you feel. And if you know about emotional childhood and emotional adulthood, which are episodes 23 and 24, you know how I feel on the story, "Someone else made me feel something."

So let's zoom out like we do and let's look at the language we use here. It's so common to hear someone say, "I resent your implication about me." And that's the thing with resentment. You are making someone else's thoughts, feelings, actions have the result of affecting you, which we know as scholars and students of the thought work protocol and the think-feel-act cycle is actually not possible.

The key difference here between anger and resentment is that anger is generally recognized as being a response to your thoughts about an incident. And it's important to note that I love anger. It can be a totally

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healthy response and we need anger and we need to let it out of our bodies.

So the example may go, “He did x, I feel y about it. I feel anger.” Resentment, on the other hand, is more of an internal game. It’s a defense of your ego, your sense of self, the story about who you are in the world, your sense of being an I in the world. Your identity. All the words, stories, experiences attached to it.

So resentment touches into that. It goes, “Someone did something to me.” There’s a personalization. And when you’re in this framework, as we so often note, the rest of the world gets clouded and you’re unable to step back, zoom out, see the other person’s point of view, see the ways from emotional adulthood that it’s not about you and you oversimplify.

Your ability to experience other people as changing creatures, humans who are in their own think-feel-act cycle, all of that is lost. It goes, “This one time she didn’t show up for me. She never will.” And with resentment, because you’re trying to protect your sense of self and your ego, this way of looking at the world becomes the glasses you see the whole world through. Like everyone is out to get you. Everyone is doing things to you. It’s all about you.

Unchecked, resentment is the best way to turn any relationship into a flaming dumpster fire and can lead to a lot of pain. Let’s back up and say the same thing more simply. When your kid brother kicks you, you get angry. You say, “Ew, David, you’re such a jerk.” The energy is outward.

He did a thing and I’m mad at him for doing a thing. Anger. Important. We get to learn to express it, to feel it, let it out. When you’re in resentment, you take it inward and make it mean I am bad for them to have done this to me. And so in response, you need to make them bad.

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Because whatever happened is about your ego and ego must be defended, so you get defensive. That makes sense. But the thing is defensive never wins. It just makes you all the angrier and more resentment. It fuels that fire.

And what's so fascinating is that when resentment is your thought habit, you can go to 10 out of 10 resentful, filling up with bitterness, anger, upset in your mind, body, spirit, whether someone just killed your pet albatross or someone forgot to send you a thank you card. It runs through to the extremes and it affects all experiences.

In a world full of injustice, humans choosing actions that we can perceive as hostility, as rudeness, there's almost always some reason for you to choose to feel resentful, to take it personally and make it about you if you want to go there in your mind, if it's your thought habit.

Maybe you didn't get the promotion you feel you deserved, someone cut you off in traffic or back in the pre-COVID days, you got bumped on the bus. Or in these days in quarantine, your partner just won't take out the garbage no matter how many times you ask them to, or won't be quiet while you're on a Zoom call, or your mom won't honor your boundary of not talking about the death rate, or your dad won't stop talking trash about your mom talking about the death rate.

All these things can become a resentment in your mind if you make them about you. Resentment can also come from thinking someone else should have done something that they didn't. That there was an inaction on their part or even that they just made a careless comment that you took on as a major slight because it touched that ego place. It triggered that old defense mechanism that likely comes from your childhood.

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If codependent thinking is part of your mental habits, then it's likely that one of the times you feel resentful is when you think you're doing something awesome and amazing for someone else and they don't respond the way you hoped or thought they would.

And often, that's probably because they didn't even ask you to do that thing. They may not even want it or have any interest in it. You didn't ask them if they wanted that thing. You didn't get consent, or just the timing is all wrong.

And then, because you put someone else ahead of yourself, you did for others what they could do for themselves, you get pissed off, upset, offended, hurt, when they let you know that they didn't want the thing that they didn't ask for that you insisted that they get from you or do for them.

That was a mouthful. Whatever the reason you're citing for feeling resentful, this thought habit is characterized by a dwelling, a stewing if you will over how you've been hurt, maligned, improperly characterized, and how the other person just isn't doing this life thing right and you're the victim.

And because it touches so deep, feels so personal and so about you, you may be feeling too much anger, shame, indignancy to be able to step back and engage in direct communication, which we talked all about in episodes 31, 32, and 33, in order to speak your needs, in order to recognize it, pause, voice it.

And so, like any wound uncared for, my beauty, it festers. And so all that grump can come out sideways as a sympathetic driven respond, dorsal vagal shutdown, withdrawal, a pulling away. And the problem with resentment is, yes, it makes you feel quite badly. It also keeps you from



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looking at the real issues and prevents you from taking responsibility for your part in creating a situation.

When your focus is on how you've been done wrong, I guarantee, you will continue to feel hurt and sorry for yourself, like the perpetual victim. Moreover, if you're stuck being pissed off about the things that happened, you're not likely to be able to change it.

When your frame of mind is that you've been done an injustice, it's hard to operate from a place of power. And it's so easy to take it all personally, to make the situation about you when really, nothing in this life ever is.

That is, and yes, I'll do a whole show about taking things personally because it's very relevant in codependency and perfectionism, if someone steals something of yours, if someone hits you, ignores you, calls you a name, forgets to send a thank you card, it's never about you. Like, you as a perfect human animal.

That is, their thoughts led to their feelings. They took an action that created an outcome, a result. And that was all about them. And yes, absolutely, their action and behavior affected you, impacted you, absolutely. And you get angry about that. Be sad about that. Have all your feels about that.

But my love, let me be clear. It wasn't about you. It was about them doing what they wanted to do. From their own think-feel-act cycle. And I know this can be so hard to swallow, but coming to understand this, and this goes back to our conversation recently about control and uncertainty, this has been so freeing in my life.

To realize everyone is just living their own life and doing what they are doing and it is literally 100% of the time not about me. It's not about me. It's always about them. Let's take a nice deep breath in, long deep breath out.

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Get ventral vagal with me, baby, I know. This is some big stuff, but that's how we do on this show, right? We go deep.

Okay, so let's take a really simple example to just pull back for a second, let your body, your nervous system relax. So let's say you have a friend who's always late. You let it slide the first few times. You're like, whatever. But now you've come to expect it and you feel resentful about it.

As soon as she's one minute late, you start to stew. How come she doesn't respect my time? Why does she keep making me miss the previews of the movies? Or what about that time I lost dinner reservations because she was over 30 minutes late to meet me? I can make it places on time. Why can't she?

As the story builds, as your ego defends itself and makes her the terrible person, the resentment builds. But here's the thing; you've likely never dealt with it directly because you're too busy seething. Or you addressed it with the attacking energy, that like, sideways I-just-really-wish-you'd-be-on-time-like-come-on-energy of a person wounded, which is not a great way to set boundaries.

And we set boundaries by saying, "If you do x, I'll do y." It's also not a great way to ask for what you need because if you aren't centered, grounded, and full up with the self-love needed to speak from your power, how are you going to speak from your power?

Let's take another really banal one. So well, banal, but can also hit really deep, right? That partner who never takes out the trash. They're not going to change because you sit there seething, like staring at the garbage can with anger, cutting your eyes at them. You drank the poison, they're fine, you're dying.

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You're upset, your resentment changes absolutely nothing in your world or anyone else's, and certainly does nothing toward your goal of letting the other person know you're upset in a constructive way. It's not how you get your point across, set a boundary, or change a thing.

The other problem with resentment is it can lead us to be reactive and to act out of anger, usually with pretty awful results. Change is seldom inspired by people being grumpy, mean, resentful. And speaking from that place, feeling from that place, living from that place takes you out of your integrity, my darling.

It also takes you out of ventral vagal, that beautiful place of safe and social connection with yourself and other humans and can launch you right into sympathetic activation when you're unable to be thoughtful or strategic there. And most of us have done or said things out of anger that we deeply regretted later.

Resentment also clouds your vision by keeping you focused on the bad and blinding you to the good. When you're smoldering with resentment, you're be sure to notice every time your partner walks by the full garbage can, but you're likely to miss the times they folded all the laundry or scrubbed the toilet or paid the bills.

You're not only going to miss the good in the person you're busy resenting. You're going to find it hard to enjoy all the other good things in your life. Resentment is a joy killer. Resentment is also just super bad for your physical and emotional health.

Being resentful causes stress and stress wreaks havoc on everything from digestion to sleep. Super-duper nerd alert, my darlings. A study - I just said a study. How nerdy is that? And I also literally - so you can picture me, I pushed my glasses further up on my face.

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A study published in the Canadian journal, Behavioral Science - god, I love those Canadians. They're so good. Showed the strong links between perfectionist habits and chronic symptoms of depression. Yet another study published in the Journal of Health Psychology found that perfectionism is directly linked to amplification of irritable bowel syndrome symptoms, even after controlling for the actual physical impact of the disease.

This study went on to show how perfectionist thinking contributed to maladaptive coping techniques, which we talked all about in episode 19, that led to other adverse effects not present in irritable bowel syndrome patients who didn't exhibit perfectionist tendencies.

And there are many more similar studies out there. Too many for us to even begin to list here. My love, resentment, codependency, and perfectionism go hand-in-hand. They're like little triplets. We've defined resentment as when you take someone else's behavior personally, make it a slight to your ego.

And if that's not part and parcel of perfectionism, I don't know what is. So as a full-on nerd, I feel safe extrapolating this data about perfectionism to our thinking about stewing in resentment. What's also fascinating is that sometimes, particularly in this context, this morass of perfectionist and codependent thinking, we can resent others for giving themselves what we are challenged to give ourselves.

That is, we judge others harshly for not holding themselves to the same painfully high standards we hold ourselves to. For example, when these habits were my norm, I found it so challenging to allow myself to relax. I was constantly running around the house and the world like a little Vic tornado. Always doing, doing, doing.

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And I remember resenting the crap out of my sweetheart who is a pro at relaxing. And the story of my head - and this was not at the level of consciousness. I recognized it later doing thought work, but the thought in there was, "If I am pushing myself to the brink and beyond, shouldn't everyone be?"

Oh brains, survival mechanisms. That's really just what that is. That's inner child survival mechanisms. So in that moment, instead of having the capacity to zoom out and to look at that, to look at why I was pushing myself so damn hard, what that unreachable, unattainable standard was for myself, I got grumpy at someone for actually doing some very lovely self-care. Do you see how silly that is?

And silly, right? Like, so painful and destructive and harmful. And I did that for a very long time in my relationships. I mean, thought habits, am I right? Thank goodness we have a protocol for that. Thank goodness we can change them. My love, no matter how good it feels in the moment, resentment is a dead end for you and the people you love.

And we hang onto it because we're avoiding conflict or protecting ourselves from the real issue the way I was for so long. And remember, all that humans want truly is to feel safe and connected. And if something has happened that distances you from that, you will resent the person, place, thing that broke that bond of trust that you will be okay.

And sometimes resentment can give us the illusion of power. When you feel that you've been wronged, you can feel out of control and like things are being done to you. Victimized. Responding by seething internally with resentment versus standing firm in your anger and saying, "That was f'd up, that was not okay," and to be clear, big fan of the latter, but holding onto it as resentment can temporarily make you feel like you have power.

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As if you're taking action and regaining control. In contrast, stopping and admitting, "That hurt," can be really challenging. And a lot of us find it easier in the short-term to boil with resentment in response to feelings of hurt than it is to breathe, center, and find the words or voice our pain directly.

And yes, trauma responses can absolutely get in the way here, and those responses are for sure something that can shift with time, attention, love, and care. Resentment is also a way to avoid taking responsibility. It's way easier to point the finger at others for the problems in your life than it is to examine how you may be contributing to them.

And many of us are simply conditioned to respond with resentment. It's what you've always done and perhaps what you've always seen modeled by the people in your life. I know this was the case for me for sure.

So what's a human to do? What's the remedy? My darling, we are always going to start with the three A's. Awareness, acceptance, and action. So the first step is recognizing that it's happening. The next time something makes you feel like you've been wronged, stop, pause, take that big deep belly breath, long exhale out.

Ask yourself what you are feeling. What's happening in your body? What are the thoughts going through your mind? See if one of your inner children, maybe an inner adolescent has come up to defend or protect you or is feeling hurt. Check in there.

See if you can attend to your physiology, to move from an agitated state to a calmer state. Again, deep breathing into your belly, long breath out. Maybe drink some water. Go for a walk. Sometimes it helps to write about what's happening and get that cognitive distance. Anything you can do to hit pause and to not be ruled by your reactive self.

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Just note what's happening and create some space between your feelings and your reactions. Start there. Awareness, nervous system, attending to the inner child. And from there, you get to do the challenging work of accepting that resentment is part of your story.

It's part of your habitual thought patterns and that's okay. You get to be really tender with yourself as you work to accept, "Oh wow, I did it again and again and again." And from that, only from there, skipping no steps can you then begin to use the thought work protocol to take action.

I want to make some very clear statements here. I'm not saying that things never need to change or that you should put up with hurtful behavior. And I'm very clear week after week that we do not stay in abusive relationships or situations ever. I'm never going to advise you to do thought work about a situation where someone is abusing you. Never. I want to support you to get out, to seek care, particularly during this quarantine. How challenging?

So with that said, I want to remind you that no matter what you want to have changed in your world, holding onto and responding, reacting from resentment will never yield the change you want and need. And being able to start to make change starts with dropping that reactive energy, the defensiveness, to recognize that it's poison.

And it starts by parsing out what you can and can't change in a given situation so you can focus your human energy on the things within your control, namely your own thoughts and feelings. So let's go back to our simple example. Your chore hating partner.

It's important to ask yourself, "What's my goal here? And how can I best achieve it?" If your goal is to make your partner feel bad, or for you to feel righteous, chances are you know just how to do that. If your goal is to actually get your partner to partner with you and to do some chores,

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speaking from resentment is really unlikely to motivate more dish washing or litter box cleaning.

What would motivate your partner? Work with them to identify the reasons why they always forget. Figure out the barriers to doing things in a way that works for everyone. So let's go back to my client, Hilda, whose mom had gotten mad about a missed FaceTime call during this pandemic.

Hilda's mom told her she was upset and hurt. And then Hilda got upset and hurt, and they both leaned right back into ages long resentments about how they do and don't show up for each other. And here, we came to see through our coaching work just how much this resentment was touching on some old, old, old stories about being worthy of love.

Stories about the conditionality of love on the part of both Hilda and her mom. Hilda was making her mom's annoyance, her mom's response mean that she was calling her a bad daughter. Unreliable, not loving.

And Hilda's mom was making the missed call mean that Hilda didn't respect her as a mother, as a grandmother, that she didn't hold her time to be valuable, which were all thoughts about herself and not about her daughter or a single missed phone call.

And this situation in the context of a lot of codependency over many years and Hilda's mom often saying things like, "You kids have no idea what I sacrificed to take care of the four of you," which is a thought framework really common in codependent thinking. Martyrdom, sainthood, savior thinking.

So Hilda felt beholden to her mom, indebted just for being born. And she also resented that. So it's like this constant chronic painful layering of resentment on resentment on resentment. Each one taking the other's



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words to mean something about them as a person, about their value and worth.

And so of course, the ego seeks to defend. Makes perfect sense. And when Hilda was able to see all this, when we're able to do the zooming out that we do in our coaching calls, Hilda was able to shift the story, to see how she was in resentment here and to recognize that her mom is both perfect, because she was born that way, and is also a limited human with her own skills and feelings, capacities, narratives, her own thoughts, feelings, actions, results.

Through this process, she began to shift out of that ego place. She began to drop the story that her mom's reaction was about her and to shift into acceptance. To see her mom's reaction as her mom's own reaction. To see that a circumstance happened. Words were said.

And staying resentful about it, holding that grudge, looking for revenge or retribution, which sounded like, "Forget this. We are not doing these calls anymore," that framework in fact just sows more discord, hurt, disconnection, the opposite of healing.

If you find yourself, like Hilda, like so many of us, like me for most of my life, chronically resentful, in that wicked codependent, perfectionist way, that story that people aren't doing as much for you that you're doing for them, or thinking they aren't doing things perfectly and it's making you grumped inside, pause, breathe, ask yourself, why are you doing these things?

Why you're having these thoughts and continuing to think them, what your goal is, why you insist on universal perfection to your standards. Ask yourself, do these thoughts bring me joy or frustration and resentment?

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And consider letting others do for themselves what they are capable of doing and doing it to their own standards for their own life.

It's not yours to manage, my love. If you want something done in a particular way, you get to do it yourself, for you. Similarly, if your story is that your partner isn't taking the garbage out to spite you and drive you bananas, you are going to stay pretty frustrated and upset.

But if you shift the story to recognize that your partner really doesn't notice when the garbage needs to go out or so preoccupied with other things it simply never occurs to them, or whatever their narrative is, and to therefore recognize it's not about you, you will likely find your resentment starts to dissipate. And you can then make a clean, clear decision for yourself from the place of radical acceptance of what is.

From self-love and unconditional love for the world. And that always leads to better decision-making and better outcomes for you. Whether it's setting boundaries, stepping into conflict, speaking your voice, speaking your needs, or changing your story internally, if you need to take action, my love, take action. But whatever else you do, first, recognize and release resentment.

Resentment never accomplishes a thing except keeping you in that wild place of attempting to control the uncontrollable and defending your ego at all costs. And that, that is no way to live, my darling. No way at all. Let's take a deep breath in, fill that belly, fill that belly, and long out.

Keep breathing, my love. You've got this. It's going to take some practice for sure. It'll take practice to even see when you're in resentment, but keep an eye out. Keep a little journal. Make note of when you're feeling that resentment growing within you and just start looking at it. Start to get a real critical eye and asking yourself the questions I posed.

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Alright my beauty, I want to share that enrollment for this class of the Feminist Wellness guide to overcoming codependency has closed. When this episode goes live, we will be milliseconds away from starting the class. Very, very exciting. And yeah, it's a really great group. I'm really excited for us to dive on in, get started, and I'll be doing the class again.

There will be another round of it in the fall. So head on over to my website, [victoriaalbina.com/masterclass](http://victoriaalbina.com/masterclass) and you can get on the mailing list so you will be the very first to learn all about the next class, when I'm offering it, all the details. If you've already applied for this masterclass, we're keeping your application and you'll get an extra special first call to hop on a call with me to see if the masterclass is a right fit for you.

I'm so excited. We're going to have a blast and I can't wait to share all this magic with this class, this May start class, and the class in the fall as well. And to keep chatting with all of you here and over email and on Instagram. Alright my darlings.

Hey, if you haven't subscribed to the show, please do. It really helps. So one of my goals in my human life is to spread these messages for free, far and wide. Like, this is sliding scale. This is care for all. This is spreading the message. This is feminism in action, making this work accessible for free.

So if you're enjoying this, if it's been helpful for you, please head on over to Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your shows and hit that subscribe button. That helps the show to get more visibility on Apple, which means that more people may randomly find it, and that's a beautiful thing.

If you're enjoying it, please leave a review. It makes my heart sing and it helps the show get found. So it's a beautiful thing that I appreciate and it helps the world. So there you go. If you're looking for one more exciting thing to do, share it on social media. If there's an episode you enjoy or you

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enjoy the show overall, take a little screenshot, put it on Instagram, Facebook, tag me. I'll repost it. It's so fun. I love being connected with you all.

I wish you could see the silly goose of a smile on my face as I'm thinking about being connected with you. It's there. Alright my beauties, be well. 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.

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.