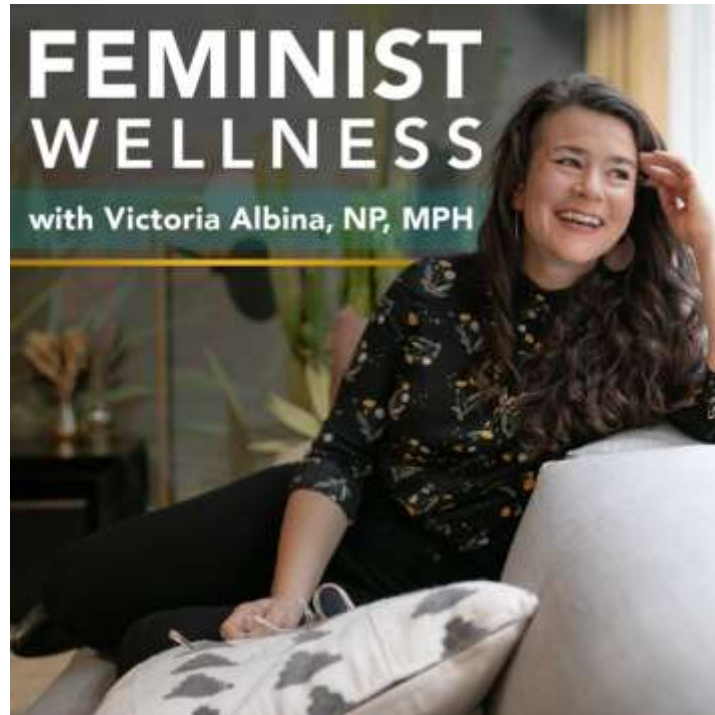


## Ep #87: Saying What You Mean & Believing Other People



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Victoria Albina, NP, MPH**

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When you've lived a life that's been all about other people and their comforts, happiness, preferences, pleasure, making declarative statements about what you do and don't want can be challenging to say the least. When you're not used to directly communicating, it can also feel very challenging to believe people and what they literally tell you.

This week, we're talking about a couple common habits that can keep us from living into our most radiant joy, habits that may not serve us. Curious? Ready to live life saying what you mean and believing other people when they say what they want? Keep listening. 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 I have been thinking a lot about you. And I am so passionate about you, my beloved listener, learning what you want and you getting it in this lifetime.

Whether what you want to do is to ask someone on a date, to tell someone you want a divorce, to get the graduate degree you want and not the one your parents want for you, to pursue a career dream, an artistic dream, to move or to tell your partner you don't want to move, whatever it may be that you actually want for you, oh my sweet love, it is so vital to our wellness on all levels to know what we want and to begin to take courageous action.

That's right, failing ahead of time, failing and failing and failing on purpose until we get what we want. Taking courageous action to live with intention.

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And for us with codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thought habits, it can feel really challenging to know what we want for ourselves because we've spent a lifetime putting our own wants and needs on the back burner while we prioritize everyone else first.

And especially for those of us socialized as women, we are often taught directly and indirectly to put other people's everything first, to be the martyr, the savior, the saint, the perfect partner, daughter, mother, on and on, and on and on. That it somehow makes us more lovable to not have desires or wants. And my love, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Over in my six-month program, *Overcoming Codependency*, we've been talking a lot about this. About how challenging it can be to say x, y, z for dinner when you grew up worried that your parents would get grumpy about it or would be like, ugh, and would make some comment that your six or eight or 12 or 16-year-old self would internalize as meaning something bad about you.

And so then as an adult, saying I want x, y, z for dinner strikes that same chord, that same little tender, worried place inside you where you're scared that your partner, your friend, whomever you're with won't want the same thing. And it's like this gut feeling, this worry that you'll be wrong or that if you say I want this and someone else doesn't want it, if someone else is not pleased or aligned with your decision or your choice for you, that they will get upset and that that will be a problem.

And this indecisiveness, this deferring to others can become your go-to stance. A way your brilliant and amazing child brain has developed to attempt to keep you safer in the world. It just doesn't serve you any longer as an adult.

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And I want to pause to caveat. If you are actually in an abusive or unsafe relationship, and appeasing, fawning, saying yes dear, if keeping someone who is violent with you or abusive as pleased with you as humanly possible while you create an escape plan is what you need to do, please do that.

And I will put links to some intimate partner violence, domestic violence hotlines in the show notes. The rest of this show is not about situations of actual violence or abuse. That's not it. So if that is you, I send you all my love and I want you to do whatever you need to do to stay safe and then get the heck out of there.

Okay, so my tender angels, one of the ways that I see this desire to attempt to keep everyone happy with us is in using language that acts as an emotional shield. So instead of saying yes or no to questions, we'll say sure or fine, or we'll ask a question in reaction to a question instead of stating our own opinions.

So that can sound like your partner saying, "Hey babe, do you want to head out?" And you go, "Well, do you want to head out?" Sorry, I'm just laughing. I'm like, oh my god, the number of times I've said that where I'm like, I hate this party, I want to leave.

Or turn around and being like, "Well, I mean, if you do." And this is so brilliant in that it keeps you from feeling like you've made a decision and thereby, if the other person disagrees, you didn't F up by being an adult human who knows themselves and what they want. And Dios mio, you weren't someone who did something as silly as speaking their mind and perhaps saying the opposite of what someone else wanted.

Oh brains. Isn't it funny, these little knots our brains tie themselves into? My love, I totally get why your brain may be inviting you to not make decisions, to attempt to remain as blameless as possible in all situations while your

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brain wants you to say, sure, I'll have pizza if you want it, instead of yes or no.

Because you think in the backest, most backest-est recesses of your mind, that this behavior, this way of responding will keep someone else from being mad at you. Same with saying fine in response to a direct question like how are you, or how's the temperature in here? Maybe you're sitting there shivering but you say fine out of reflex, or maybe you don't know how to pause to check in with yourself because it's never been safe or okay, you've never been encouraged to do it, and it was never modeled for you.

Another favorite along this passive communication line is saying, "Hey, do you want to get going?" When you actually mean, "Hey, I want to get going. Do you want to come with me or do you want to find your own way there?" It's also this funny thing that when we say sure, or fine, it's like we're passing the buck for making a decision for our own lives to someone else.

You're sort of saying I'll just do whatever you want me to do, like do you want more mashed potatoes? Sure. Do you want to go to this party? Fine. You're not being responsible for the outcome if you are just sort of acquiescing instead of having an opinion. Then that other person is responsible for the outcome.

It's really interesting, right? And it's actually not that kind or loving, come to think of it. When you're not saying yes please or no thank you, when you're not owning your own choice, but rather asking someone else to take that on for you.

And there are situations where saying fine and sure are just linguistic habits that are totally neutral and that aren't weighted and aren't cover ups, but maybe for those of us who are listening to this show, there's something

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more to that passive language. I don't know for you, babe, but there 110% was for me in my life.

So we nerd alert. Remember, about 20% of the feelings, the energy, the sensations in your body are caused by your thoughts. That top down brain-body experience. So your brain has a cognition, a thought, and your body responds.

So I'll invite you to look at your thoughts the next time someone asks you if you want something, if you'd like something, if you want an experience to be different, if you want to leave or to stay, check in with yourself. Are you saying fine, sure, whatever you want, or turning the question around as a way to deflect and to attempt to protect your tenderest self from potentially saying the "wrong" thing?

Yes, that was in air quotes and thus, being criticized or judged. I'll just invite you to get curious to see what's coming up for you. Remember that so often, our brains are habituated to perfectionist thinking because we're telling that story that if we look perfect, amiable, nice, good, acceptable, approvable on the outside, no one can criticize or critique us.

And while that's totally not actually true, the truth is that the criticism we fear is not the external. It's the internal. It's you saying that you are wrong or bad or an F up. And while most of us don't want to hear that we are wrong, bad, or an F up from others, the mean voice we fear the most is the one in our own minds.

The one that says, "Why didn't you just agree? Now he's upset." Or, "Why did you tell them you had to leave? Now they're being all mopey again." And we do that thing that is such a cornerstone of codependent thinking, taking things personally, making things about us, and making other

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people's thoughts and feelings, both our fault and our problem, when in fact, they are neither.

And this whole thought habit of deflection, demurring is alluring because of the false thought that it protects you, my beauty. And again, I totally get that. So the work here is to get real with yourself about what you're making someone else's disapproval or potential disapproval or whatever emotions you think or worry they may have if you speak your mind about you as a human.

And how you can start to shift how you hear someone else's words so that you can no longer make it mean about you. And for me, that started with learning to take other people at their literal word and to stop reading into what they were saying, which was certainly challenging at first.

So let's practice. If someone says, "Hey babe, I want to head home," you can now choose to interpret that as them saying that they want to head home. I'm being funny babes, but really, my brain, if someone was like, "Hey babe, I want to head home," my brain would start to interpret it like, oh, does that mean he wants to leave now? Or is that in five minutes? Does he want me to go with him? Would it be okay?

My brain would start - these machinations, all this swirling around. But what it really meant was like, a human said words, the words they said are I want to head home. And that doesn't mean that I have to leave with them if I'm having a good time, or that I can't get myself home later. It literally means nothing except what it means.

For another example, if your date says, "Hey babe, I want to go out for Korean barbecue tonight," you really do get to just hear them say that that's what they want for dinner tonight. It doesn't mean you have to have it, it

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doesn't mean you're obligated. It literally means nothing other than they want that for their dinner.

Most important in both of these situations is that you get to choose to hear the literal words and believe them. You don't have to make them mean anything else at all. If someone else wants barbecue, they can have it and you can get whatever you want, and then you can sit on a bench or in the park or whatever and you can eat side by side and you can just have whatever you want.

You don't have to start making anyone else's words mean anything about you ever. I want barbecue doesn't mean you are a bad date or a bad friend if you don't also want barbecue. Your partner saying they want to go home doesn't mean you have to or that you're bad or wrong in any way at all for not wanting to leave with them or for wanting to leave before them.

You get to want what you want. And you get to take other people at their word. And it's mind-blowing. I know. And I'm really being super-duper earnest here. This was a mind-blowing shift for me because I had spent a lifetime trying to read between the passive-aggressive and indirect cracks in other people's communication.

Deciding to no longer do that has been so liberating. I highly recommend it. And I'll just share that I for one love it when someone speaks their needs super directly, clearly telling me what they want and need. It's a beautiful gift.

So while you practice this new skill of taking people at their word, I want to invite you to try something new on for just a little minute to see what it feels like in your mind, body, and spirit to pause when someone else asks you your preference, your desires, your wants, your opinions.



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I want to invite you to take a nice little breath, slow yourself down, hit that internal pause button, and just check in with yourself. Ask your body what it wants. Get present. If grounding in your body isn't a safe or good choice for you, orient to where you are in the world if you get activated, if you start to retreat into yourself.

And if words like grounding and orienting are new to you, make sure that you head on over to [victoriaalbina.com](http://victoriaalbina.com). Right on the homepage, you can get my free meditations to support you in learning how to ground and orient.

Alternately, if you would like, you can also drop me a text message at 917-540-8447, put your email in there and the word meditations and I will send you a whole suite of meditations, including the grounding, orienting, inner child, boundaries - there's a whole bunch of meditations and you'll get them via email. So those are two great options to learn how to do orienting exercises.

So my darling, someone asks you, "Hey, do you want to stay or do you want to go now?" And your brain starts reeling with all these stories, all these options, or you go into that immobilization, dorsal shutdown, which is where my brain would usually go of like, what is this person actually saying?

Starting to read into all of it. Put a little hand on that tender heart and ask yourself, what do you really want? What do you really want to say or do? Maybe you want to say, "Oh hey, I don't want tacos tonight," or, "I really would love a steak," or, "I'm going to stay in the park and read. Go home if you want to," or, "Hey, before you leave, it would mean a lot to me if you texted me this weekend."

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So if it feels really challenging to say those things out loud at this point, all good, sweetness. Totally good. You just get to practice hearing the desire to say these things and then you get to practice speaking your wants, your needs, your desires in your own mind, and then allow it.

Allowing the people in your world to manage their own minds around you having opinions and preferences. Remember, in this family, we titrate. We go slow and steady. Please don't freak your nervous system out. You can start alone by asking yourself what you want when it's just you doing it all in your head.

And then you can try this out with a friend who is perhaps a gentler soul and you can see how that goes. You could also share this episode on your social media or with your friend group and you can see if someone wants to be your accountability buddy around stating your preferences and taking folks literally at their word.

Gosh, that would be super-duper sweet, wouldn't it? That would be a lovely thing to do. So you could have this friend where you practice making these statements. I would like to go, "Hey, can I borrow your hat?" Whatever it is so you can hear yourself making these statements and feeling okay, right?

Little baby steps here like we talked about in episode 81 about the window of bodily dignity. In my own life, learning to take people literally and at their word and practicing dropping the fine and sure and that old habit of deferring to others with, well, what do you want, has been so super-duper life-changing.

So I want to invite you to practice this and let me know how it goes and how this lands for you. You can drop me an email, [podcast@victoriaalbina.com](mailto:podcast@victoriaalbina.com), or send me a text message. 917-540-8447. And you'll get on my list to get text messages from me. I send them a

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couple times a week and they're just sweet love notes and it's a really tender, beautiful thing and it's really nice. So join us if you want to.

Okay my loves, this one was short and sweet, just like me. I hope it was helpful. Don't be a stranger. You know I love hearing from you so be in touch. Alright, let's do what we do. Nice big deep breath in and out. Remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my beauty. 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](http://VictoriaAlbina.com) to learn more.