

Ep #92: Radical Self-Responsibility



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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How often do you procrastinate on a project and then blame someone else for it not getting done when in fact, you didn't do it because you spent the afternoon buffering on social media? How often do you talk about how the things you commit to just don't get done, or how someone else made you feel bad?

Do you live your life with radical self-responsibility, owning what is yours to take ownership of in this life? I know I for sure didn't for a really long time. And having done and still doing the work to shift that habit, I'm here to tell you just how much more empowering it is to really own my own life, my feelings, my outcomes. Curious? 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. As I was sitting here preparing to record this for you, I looked out the window and the sunset this evening was so breathtakingly beautiful. All pinks and purples. And I found myself just staring at it, mouth gaping, like my eyes were hungry to take it all in.

I love the feeling of wonder and awe that I get from connecting to nature. It's such powerful medicine for me. It's a resourcing for my nervous system and I don't take it for granted for one little minute after so many years of living on occupied Lenape territory in Brooklyn, New York City.

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Being around the trees, putting my hands in the earth, witnessing the sunset with no big buildings on the horizon, wow, so magical. My sweet one, I hope you are finding the wonder and beauty in your life, your world, your surroundings, even when it's challenging to see all that wonder and beauty. It's there. I know it.

Today, I'm going to talk about a thought habit that can sort of feel in the moment to be an act of self-love but at its core is really not. It's a theme I see over and over again in my clients and it's something I certainly did myself for sure and definitely will start to do these days too because your gal is only human over here, and that is evading responsibility.

This is one of the areas we take a deep, deep dive into in my six-month program, *Overcoming Codependency*, because this can be an advanced and sort of nuanced topic, and that beautiful six-month container of the program and the feeling of truly being in community, in familia, in family there helps to nurture and nourish us so we can go to these deep places, which is so magical.

It's so beautiful. So I'm going to give you a little inside sneak peek into the program today, which is really fun because we take the concepts I share here on *Feminist Wellness* and really pull them apart, really get real with them, identify and see how and where they show up in our lives so we can begin to really use the thought work protocol to make long-lasting sustainable change in our lives.

So if this is your first time listening to *Feminist Wellness* and you're like, what, I don't get it, what is thought work, what is a thought work protocol, you might want to start a little further back in the show so you can understand what I'm talking about when I talk about thought work here.

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So we are going to talk about taking radical responsibility for and in our lives. And to start, as always and forever, the following does not in any way apply to situations of abuse, where you are being made responsible, someone's attempting to make you responsible for something you're actually not responsible for.

So what comes to mind for me is trauma, abuse, discrimination, prejudicial behavior, that is so not what I'm talking about here, my darling sweet kitten. In those situations, I want to remind you and I want to invite you to remind yourself that being mistreated is never your fault or responsibility.

That person is making a choice because our thoughts create our feelings, we take action based on our feelings, and we create a result or outcome in our lives, that person is making a choice to mistreat you and that is not your fault. That is not your responsibility, so that's not what we're talking about here, and I want to encourage you if that is the situation you're in, to please work with a trusted expert to put together a plan to get you to safety. You deserve that.

Okay my beauties, let's take a breath in through our noses, and out. Put a little hand on your heart, center yourself, ground yourself. Okay, here we are together again.

So when I look back on my life and all the codependent, perfectionist, people-pleasing thought habits that I had rolling around inside me, it was kind of like I had a black belt in not taking responsibility for my actions or my life.

I mean, it was kind of one of my superpowers. And if you're a regular listener and you identify with these thought patterns, you may have a

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similar level of prowess with dodging and evading taking ownership for what you think, feel, do, and create in your own life.

And from jump let me say, I don't mean evading blame. And I do mean not taking responsibility. Because well, it's this fascinating thing that happens in our minds where we take things wildly personally. We make things that don't mean anything about us mean something terrible about us, often in this overly dramatic way. And we blame the crap out of ourselves for so much in the world.

It's a different thing. It's a different energy, right? And so next week we'll be talking about the concept of taking too much responsibility, mostly for things that aren't ours, and blaming ourselves for things that are not ours. So make sure you're subscribed to the show so you don't miss a single episode, my sweet one. Because it's important and I want you to hear that. The yang to the yin of this one.

Or maybe it's the opposite. Maybe this is yang and that's yin. Anyway, these two are in balance, and so I'll invite you to make sure you listen to them both. So from that place of those thought habits, codependent thinking, perfectionist, people-pleasing thinking, we can habitually take blame for things that are not ours and simultaneously, we can be shirking responsibility in our own lives.

Expecting people to do for us as we do for them, without them even asking to. So it's that expectation of reciprocation and resentment if it doesn't happen. There can also be that resentment-laced undercurrent of doing so much for others that we expect them to read our minds and to step up to take responsibility for us and our feelings.

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We've taken over responsibility for their whole lives, right? So shouldn't they do the same? The thought habit driving this is that all or nothing thinking that so many of us learned in childhood. That thought habit that says either I'm amazing or I'm terrible. Either I'm doing great, or I'm a failure.

Or as a client recently put it, either I'm on the beam, on the balance beam with all of the things, with food and movement and meditation and journaling and thought work and parenting, everything, or it's all a disaster. I'm off the beam.

Here, it may sound obviously on a subconscious level in our minds, like I'm so terrible, everyone knows it, I'm a constant F up and I can't let anyone know it. So I'll make sure to not take responsibility because everything is my responsibility because it's on me to control the world or I'll be unsafe, so I can't be seen as F-ing up.

It's a total mind-bender, right? We have these really contrasting paradoxical beliefs about ourselves in our minds, and one of my goals here is to help you to see that, to see those contrasting beliefs so that you can come into a new understanding of them and can choose those stories you want to repeat about yourself moving forward.

And of course I want to say my beautiful, beautiful, sweet angels, this train of thought, this I'm the worst but I'm in charge of the world so I can't let anyone see that I'm actually the worst or they'll abandon me, I'll be unsafe, I'll be eaten by lions, this is so common.

So if this is resonating for you, please, please, please, please know that you're not alone. Most of my clients and most of the amazing humans in my

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six-month program are dealing with some variation of this same story. So my beauty, it's not just you, truly.

So if our young minds took this narrative on and our lizard brains, that reptilian part of our brain concurs with this story because of that last part, we thought this would keep us safe, then this story can run our world. And the story can get boiled down into if I am responsible, I am in danger.

And maybe in childhood or other points in your life, it did actually feel dangerous. And so you were able to stay two steps ahead of criticism. You got the A+, or you protected yourself by skateboarding away from home the millisecond you could so no one could berate you, and you wisely took on the mantel of believing that you, yes you, had to control all the feelings of all of the people around you or doom was certain.

And I'm always out here to see the brilliance of our inner children, our inner village, and this protector part is so brilliant and amazing and loves you. And yeah, creates these painful scenarios and holds on to stories as though they were facts.

That F's up your life and keeps you from meeting your goals. But wow, let's really just sit with that for a moment. This protector part, this inner child part loves you so much. That's why it spun this whole story and tries to intervene to keep you from taking responsibility.

And I want you to keep that in mind. Your protector parts are just trying to love you up. And sure, they're doing it in a way that adult you no longer needs. That's what those little ones are doing.

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And the way I see this playing out with the survival mechanism as perfectionism is you feel this deep desire for everyone and you to think you're absolutely perfect. And so you generally have that perfectionist thought fantasy that nothing other than doing it all perfectly all the time will do.

And of course it's challenging to take responsibility and to not find somewhere else to shift the blame to when you don't do what your perfectionism expected you to do, when it turns out that you are a human and not a superhuman. And so many of my clients describe themselves this way, as having the thought that they have to be superwomen or supermom or super whatever in order to feel safe and okay and lovable.

People-pleasing thoughts also demand that we don't take responsibility for our lives. Because if you've F'ed up, you haven't made everyone on earth happy. And if you haven't done that, then people won't be pleased. And dios mio, my god, someone might think you're not that perfect, people-pleasing, superhuman, and then your brain starts ruminating with thoughts like what will they think of me if I say I didn't make time to finish that project, or procrastinate instead of doing what I was supposed to do, or that I don't have the tools and resources to do this new task that was given to me, but I was too worried about what you'd think about me if I asked for help so I didn't ask for help and well, here we are.

And if you still believe that what other people think of you matters or is any of your business, then it is likely that you will continue to evade radical self-responsibility. And if you're a long-time listener, you've heard me talk about this concept of cassette tapes in our mind.

And so there's a cassette take, it was put in there at birth, and then a new track was recorded. Throughout your childhood, your adolescence, your

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young adulthood, and because it's the cassette tape that's always played in your mind, you're going to believe what it says to be fact if you aren't pausing to do daily thought work in order to see your own thinking, to see your own mind.

And if you're not actively practicing being in watcher mode, then that cassette tape can sound like, "I didn't have the chance to do my..." fill in the blank. So thought work, meditation, movement, journaling. It can sound like, "I'm so annoyed that she's having her bachelorette in the Caribbean and I have to go and spend all this money on her."

It can sound like, "I didn't mean to say that" or, "He hurt my feelings. I'm so pissed he forgot my birthday after all that I do for him." And it can sound like the self-limiting ones. "Well, it's just the way I am. You know me, I'm a Type A person, of course I stayed up all night working on that project and now I'm exhausted."

I could go on, but I think you get the picture. The lack of responsibility-taking for our own lives, for our own outcomes, results, for the experience, energies, world we are co-creating with the people in our lives, it sounds a lot like emotional childhood, episode 23 and 24, because it is that.

It's emotional childhood run rampant. So let's look at some of these more closely, my beauty. So a client said this one to me the other day. She said - I asked her, "How's your thought work going?" And she said, "Oh, I did the thought work when I had the chance."

And I was like, "When you had the chance?" She was like, "Well, I didn't have the chance to do my thought work every day." And I was like, oh, this happens by chance? Not by you as an adult deciding you're going to do it?

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Or were you actively in a burning building saving kittens there all day every day for the last week? Literally every waking minute of the day?

And I don't say these things to be harsh, but it's literally my job to call it like I see it. And saying I didn't have the chance, or I didn't have the time to, or I did it when I could is selling yourself short. It's not taking radical self-responsibility for the choices that you, as your adult self-made.

And we will continue to do that if we have the experience of not trusting ourselves or we have the experience of knowing we are going to beat ourselves up on the backend for not doing the thing. So instead, the truth for this client was I didn't prioritize thought work this week.

Another common truth is thought work can feel a little scary sometimes and I don't want to see the truth of my life. Okay, wow, how much more powerful is that, right? Owning I didn't prioritize it or recognizing the feelings that were a barrier between you and doing whatever it is, thought work, meditation, exercise.

And baby, you did your thought work, or you didn't, you meditated, or you didn't, you moved and exercised, or you didn't, and that's cool. Totally fine. You're an adult. My clients are adult. Do it or don't, but don't be dishonest with yourself.

And not taking responsibility for your own choices and outcomes is a way of continuing to live in the dishonesty that is often part and parcel of codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thinking. And you, you get to choose to get real with that.

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You may have learned that it kept you feeling safe or to not be honest, and that's what has been. That's the past. You get to use your prefrontal cortex, your logical reasoning mind to decide the thoughts you are going to think, starting today, for tomorrow.

You get to decide what it'll be to create a life your present and future self can be so proud of. That same client later said, "I'm so annoyed that my friend Chrissy is having her bachelorette in the Caribbean and I have to go and spend all this money on her that I don't have. Doesn't she know that I just took a pay cut, that the economy's been so hard here in Maine?"

Okay, so there she was. Resentful of someone making a choice for their own life about where they would have a gathering. An important caveat, this example came from pre-COVID times. But anyway, the circumstance here, and remember, we talk about circumstances as a way to get clarity on our lives.

We get to neutral about the meaning, we take out all the adjectives, the adverbs, all the subjective data and present the objective truth of the matter. And the circumstance here is friend invited me to a party. Do you see how you can create any experience from that statement?

You can think pretty much anything, feel pretty much anything, take any action, create pretty much any result. How freeing, right? When you've been stuck in your old cassette tapes.

So circumstance, friend invited me to a party. My client took this to mean that she was being imposed on, that she had to go, or the friend would think bad things about her. And in her deep desire to people-please, to avoid a friend thinking badly of her, ironically indeed, she was thinking badly of her friend.

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My client was blaming her friend Chrissy for her budget, her needs. She was not taking responsibility for the fact that she doesn't have to do anything. She gets to go if she wants to and she can also graciously decline without shifting the locus of responsibility onto her friend and to villainize her for inviting my client to a party.

Do you see how insidious and sneaky that one is? It's that insistence that others think of us in this way that we're not thinking of them. Powerful, right? So next, let's look at the old I didn't mean to say that.

And this one brings our episodes all about responsibility and apologizing to mind. So that's the miniseries from episodes 72 to 76. And there, we talk about how as emotional adults, we get to take responsibility for the impact of our behavior, to own it, and to be responsibility for what we said, even when yes, of course, you totally didn't mean it.

And someone is letting you know they're hurt. And when we put our hands up defensively and say, "I didn't mean to, I didn't mean to," not only are we not showing up in community, we're not showing up for the people we love and care about, we're blocking our own growth.

Sure my darling, you didn't mean to, that's okay, but you did it. So you get to get real about it, to learn and to grow by taking radical self-responsibility, or you can continue to not do that and to stay in that defensive stance. But my beauty, where does that get you?

Finally, "He hurt my feelings. I'm so pissed he forgot my birthday after all that I do for him." And there are two things at play here. One, making our feelings other people's responsibility, and two, the old martyr archetype.

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First, I've said it before, and I shall say it again with love and care. Your thoughts create your feelings. No one else's anything creates your feelings. So if someone says or does something, you get to decide how you want to think about it and what feelings you want to create and generate in your body.

What molecules of emotion you want to release within your human form. And of course, inner children. They may speak up first to say ouch, that hurt my feelings. And that's totally fine, they get to say that. And you get to remember that you are an adult, and you get to honor them and how they immediately react, understanding they're children after all and they are often reactionary and that's okay.

That's when you get to step in as your most loving parent to soothe them, to give them tenderness. So you can respond to whatever happened from your most adult self, your most self-loving place, in which you recognize that it's an amazing gift to be able to manage your own mind and to create your own feelings.

That's a powerful and empowering place to be, my sweet one. And outsourcing your feelings, handing that power over to someone else devalues your own brilliance and your own power.

The second half of this is that old martyr complex, which is so common amongst codependent thinkers. And again, always one to stand in my realness. I have so totally done this a thousand times in a million different ways.

So that martyr complex, and as I'm thinking about it, I'll do a whole show about it, but it's quite simply taking on the weight of the entire world on your shoulders, but feeling resentful about it, feeling like a martyr about it. It

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often comes with this phrasing, “Look at all I’ve done for you,” where you do all these things that no one else asks you to do, and my goodness are you resentful about it.

So there’s a lot of radical self-responsibility to take in there. Doing things no one asks you to, feeling resentful, choosing to stay in resentment, and choosing to continue on in that codependent line of thinking, in which you doing for others is what makes you valuable, lovable, worthy, versus recognizing you simply are that and you get to own it.

And you get to drop that onus that you’ve put on your own self and was put on you by society and conditioning for sure. Yeah, that story that you have to do all of those things.

Another thing just popped into my mind. I think there’s something here for sure about our socialization and conditioning, particularly for those of us socialized and raised as girls and women, where we were taught that if someone loves us, they’ll take responsibility for our feelings.

So we can go ahead and hand that on over, and my love, it’s just not true. Other people do not create your thoughts and feelings and you don’t create other people’s thoughts and feelings. And the sooner you can integrate that and can truly come to believe it, mind, body, and spirit, the more power you will have in your own beautiful life. A life I know you are working to live with wild presence and intention.

So let’s do what we do and talk remedies. The first is my favorite, be your own watcher. That’s right, I’m kicking us all the way back to episode two with this one. You cannot change what you can’t see and feel, so you get to bring your most loving, gentle, kind awareness to the words you use to describe your life.

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Ask yourself where you're giving your power away by assigning ownership for the results or outcomes in your life to others. The ways and places where you are giving the responsibility for your feelings and your actions away.

Two, as you start to notice these phrases, these thoughts, and whatever permutation of what I shared shows up for you, ask yourself and get as real as you can about how those thoughts make you feel. So I feel powerless and exhausted when I think my thought work didn't get done.

And so if I take a little breath, my thought work didn't get done, yeah, that feels like a heaviness behind my eyes, like a little lump in my throat, like at the throat chakra. And that's interesting, my lower back just got kind of achy when I brought my attention into my body.

So you can work to notice either the feeling, if you have access to those words, or the sensations in your body. So when I pause to shift it and I say I didn't do my thought work, I made the choice to not do it today, I feel really powerful. And I feel like I can really participate in my life when I realize that that's a choice.

Because then I can ask myself a powerful follow-up question from that place of radical honesty. And that follow-up question brings us to number three, which is the question of why. So I'll ask myself, why am I doing this? What is my internal motive? Why do I want myself or someone else to believe that I'm not responsible? That I'm powerless to create what I want to in this life?

Why do I want to avoid responsibility and continue to give my power away? For years, my own answer was that it felt safer to not be the F up, and now

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I realize that my actual true power is in saying I totally F'ed up and I'm going to dig deep to get real on the why.

Step four is to practice rephrasing it. So when you hear yourself starting to say these things, to not take responsibility, you get to engage your neuroplasticity, your brain's capacity to shift and change and believe new things to change out the cassette tape.

This can be in your journal, in your daily thought work, and yes, I highly encourage you to do your thought work daily, my little dumpling pie. You can do this in your own mind, and you can even do it out loud.

If your first reaction to recognizing or being told or being asked about a project that you didn't finish and you hear yourself about to say, "I didn't have time," and you are in that watcher place and you hear yourself saying it, a beautiful option is to say, you know what, I actually want to rephrase that. It wasn't that I didn't have the time. I didn't make the time.

Or, and this is depending on the level of vulnerability the occasion calls for. We talk differently to our boss or our best friend or our sibling or a spouse. You may want to say, "You know what, I'm working through my procrastination and I didn't get it done. I'm going to come up with another plan to manage my time differently, or to work through my perfectionism," or baby, whatever is true for you.

But get into the truth of what's real for you. Because when we hear ourselves speaking the honest truth and don't experience ourselves immediately bursting into flames, it starts to build trust in us within us. You start to show you that it's okay and safe and actually really beautiful to live a radically honest life where you're owning what's yours.

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And finally, stay away from blame. So blaming ourselves for our choices is beating ourselves up. Being mean and cruel to ourselves, saying it's your fault, you're a big dummy, can't believe you did or didn't do that again. Self, you're the worst.

And our brains do that. It's an attempt to keep us safe from external blame until we can teach ourselves a new way to think. And it's imperative that we do so because blame is so painful and so harmful. It's antithetical to our goals and blame gets us nowhere.

Meanwhile, responsibility is empowering and it feels so good in my body to own my truth, even when it's from a mess up or a thing that for sure I wish I hadn't done but sure did do. And when you recognize that we do what we do because of the thoughts in our minds, we can remind ourselves that we have the power to break the cycles of thinking mean things about us, of putting us down, and we can change the thoughts that lead us to buffer, blame, or otherwise not come to our lives with honesty.

And that is a beautiful and magnificent thing. Making yourself wrong and bad doesn't help. Recognizing that you can change your default mental cassette tape, wow, that sure does help each and every time.

Okay my love, that was a lot but that's how we do here, right? We go deep, we lay it all out. But let that sink in. Radical self-responsibility, that's the name of the game. And next week, I'll be back to talk about taking responsibility for things that are not ours, namely other people's feelings and lives because it's part of this whole codependent thinking healing process too.

And of course, I'll loop back for that martyrdom episode. I shall make note, put it on the list. Alright my beauties, if you've been listening to the show

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and you're loving what you're learning here, you're going to want to check out my six-month program, The Feminist Wellness Guide to Overcoming Codependency.

This is a high-touch, intensive, love-filled community program that features hundreds of hours of time with me over the course of six months in a very small, sweet, intimate group. There are weekly lessons with workbooks and journaling prompts, meditations and monthly group breathwork, weekly live coaching with me, and text coaching every single weekday with me, all in a loving, gentle, encouraging, no BS community of like-minded humans who are also dedicated to their own growth and taking radical self-responsibility.

Head on over to victoriaalbina.com/masterclass to learn more and to fill out a quick, short little application form today. So ahead and do so and my team will be in touch to get you on my schedule. I love this course. It's my dream come true.

And the next group that starts at the end of January 2021 is already about half full. So if you're interested, if you've been thinking about it, if you're really loving the show and it's helping you grow, don't hesitate. You really, really deserve to get one-on-one guidance from me, to get coaching from me, and to feel how amazing it feels to be in a community of like-minded folks. It's dreamy.

Alright my beauties, let's do what we do. Nice breath in through the nose 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.

If you've been enjoying the show and learning a ton, it's time to apply it with my expert guidance so you can live life with intention, without the anxiety,

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overwhelm, and resentment, so you can get unstuck. You're not going to want to miss the opportunity to join my exclusive intimate group coaching program, so head on over to victoriaalbina.com/masterclass to grab your seat now. See you there. It's going to be a good one.