

Ep #132: Are You Being Nice or Kind?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine Expert, and Life Coach, Victoria Albina. I'll show you how to get unstuck, drop the anxiety, perfectionism, and codependency so you can live from your beautiful heart. Welcome my love, let's get started.

Hello, hello my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. This week, we're going to be talking about two often confused words and frameworks for living and how we tend to relate to them as externalizers, as folks with codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thought habits, who tend to source our self-worth externally from other people, places, and things.

And I'll be doing what I love to do, bringing both a cognitive or thought work lens and a somatic or body-based lens to the conversation. And our topic, these two confused words is the difference between being nice and being kind; something I myself confused for so many years and see my clients in Anchored, my six-month program, confusing frequently.

And my beauty, this matters. Language always matters because it's what gives shape and meaning to our lived experience. So we'll be talking about how we think about these concepts in terms of our own behavior and what we expect or demand from others often from our own habit of codependent, people-pleasing, and perfectionist thinking.

So let's start as we are one to do on *Feminist Wellness*, with throwing the patriarchy the whole way under the bus. So humans socialized as women in particular are trained to be nice, to put others and their wants and needs ahead of our own, to self-sacrifice, to be the martyr, the savior, the saint, the fixer, which we talked about in episode 71.

There's also a very specific story about what nice looks like that often gets conflated with being polite, with "good manners," that comes from white

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settler colonialism and seeks to continue to erase cultural practices outside that norm by calling them not nice.

Practices like eating with your hands, which is perfectly normal in so much of the world, and this is done as part of a push towards more and more whiteness in the guise of being polite and nice.

I remember being scolded in elementary school for clicking my tongue before answering. I was told that it was rude, a.k.a not nice, and while this habit is so common in Latin America and across other cultures, and for me, as a little Argentine American immigrant, I meant no disrespect.

It was like the white American girl saying, “Umm.” Even right there I did it without meaning to, right? And yet, it was coded as not being nice. So I was told I was doing something wrong and that it was incumbent upon me to be nice instead of being the fullest expression of myself from within my own cultural framework.

So we learn to prioritize being polite, nice girls, good girls, going along to get along, and when you pair that with codependent thought habits, especially when they're modeled at home, when they're a part of our family blueprint, it's no wonder we lose touch with our feelings, with our bodies, our boundaries, with our internal barometers of what is and isn't okay with us.

No wonder it's so challenging to know what we want for ourselves, to name our wants and to honor them when we've been conditioned to play nice our whole lives. When that is what is expected of us, to put ourselves aside, lest our existence, our wants, our needs bother someone else.

So nice is about pleasing others. And it comes from our conditioning, our socialization to placate others, to look good in the world and be well

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thought of, which is rooted in codependently caring more about what others think of you than what you think of you.

And it's not that I have beef with nice per se, but the problem is that it's often all about the optics, about how we believe others will read us and think of us if we do what we're taught is nice, versus living in our authenticity, which when you boil it down is what *Feminist Wellness* is all about, what getting anchored in you and overcoming codependent habits, healing our inner children is all about.

Living boldly, fiercely, unapologetically as you, for you, and being kind along the way. Because when we are nice for the sake of it, we're not acting from our realness, from our truth. And we continue to train our brains to put nice, external nice, above taking care of ourselves.

Nice above our boundaries, nice above feeling good about ourselves because we are performing nice, hoping someone else will notice. Someone else will say thank you, and then often only then we can then feel good about ourselves.

Versus sourcing feeling good about ourselves from within ourselves, from within our own hearts, our bodies, our minds. And when we privilege niceness, it makes it so much more challenging to speak up when we want to because speaking up often isn't nice.

See, niceness is about attempting to grasp at certainty, at control. Demanding niceness of ourselves and others is a way to attempt to manipulate the world around us. If I behave this way that society taught me, that my family of origin taught me, I will get this result, I will get this response from other humans if I'm playing the part.

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Niceness leaves no space for authenticity, individuality, truth telling, real self-love for you or others because niceness expects us to behave, think, and feel in certain ways that often don't align with our true desires, our needs, our wants.

Kindness is in the acceptance and in the flow. In recognizing that we are all different and living from there, versus from a set of stories that dictate how we should all behave. Kindness and thought work go hand in hand because the choice to be kind comes from kind thoughts, loving thoughts, intentional, aware thoughts.

And kindness goes hand in hand with somatics or body-based work because the more in touch with our felt experience of being alive in our bodies, of being bodies, not just having them, the more grounded we are in our sense of self, the more we experience having our own backs as a felt experience, which leaves so much space and energy to be in relationship from true kindness.

My love, the call to be kind comes from inside the house. It's internally driven and comes from our big, open hearts, from that wellspring of love for humans and all our relations that is within each of us, just waiting to get tapped into.

Kindness is not about reciprocation. It's about giving, about caring, about doing things for others or the world that maybe no one sees, no one notices, no one gives you a thank you for, and from your kindness, you want to do those things anyway.

Being of service in the world for the betterment of the world, giving and receiving love for the sake of love, and calling folks in and setting limits and boundaries when their behavior doesn't meet your standards for how you

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will be treated. And you know how much I want you to raise your standards, my love.

Here is another big confusion point. Kindness is not about being a doormat. It's not about letting people walk all over you or get away with mistreating you. Not at all. It's about being real and truthful.

And therefore, kindness is in so many ways the opposite of living from our codependent thought habits. See, it's not kind to be dishonest by people pleasing. It's not kind to be dishonest by being codependent. It's not kind to be dishonest by putting others ahead of yourself and then resenting them for you.

It's not kind to be dishonest by judging others instead of accepting them and making honest decisions about whether you want them in your life or not. It's not kind to be dishonest by staying in relationships with family, parents, partners, friends, work colleagues, when you actually don't want to be.

No, my love, don't get it confused. Being kind is not about being a doormat. It's about speaking up, speaking your truth, and showing up in your honesty in all your relationships.

Kindness is part and parcel of our essential human task, a term from my teacher Armand, which means to live from our authenticity. To express ourselves as fully as we can in each moment, to not hide or conceal ourselves, to be fully present in every moment of life and to live from our big open hearts; the opposite of codependent living.

Kindness is living in our integrity, in radical honesty with ourselves and others. Kindness says I see you for who you truly are. I accept you and I

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don't want to change you. Don't want to try to manipulate you to think, feel, or act differently so I can feel safe.

Instead, I will manage me, will speak my wants and needs and boundaries and I will treat you with kindness, dignity, respect, and autonomy. And this is often the opposite of our subconscious codependent script that says I don't fully love and accept me. I don't know how to source safety from within myself, so I project my anxiety, fear, and worry onto you.

And I want you to change, to read my mind, to respond a certain way, to act a certain way, to be the person I want you to be so I can tell the story that I am safe because I don't know how to feel safe in my body otherwise.

My darling love, my tender ravioli, kindness is embodied. It is felt, it is somatic, it is grounded and grounding, genuine and real. Being nice means treating people with dignity and respect and listen, that's a beautiful thing. And being kind goes so much further.

Kindness is in your actions. The A-line of our thought work protocol: circumstance, thought, feeling, action, result. Kindness is in your behavior, the way you shine your heart outward into the world, holding space for yourself and others, setting, holding, honoring boundaries, being kind is a mindset.

A way of being and moving through the world, while being nice is a moment to moment choice. To smile, or to be polite, to hold a door, to compliment someone, and nothing wrong with those choices at all. They're lovely. Being nice is a positive way we can choose to treat others, and being kind is much more significant because it comes from deeply valuing yourself and others and goes beyond those external expressions.

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It's based in a commitment to showing up in your realness, which is challenging when your mind is codependent and people pleasing, when you value perfectionism over realness, when you care more about how your actions will look than how they feel in your body.

And one of the hallmarks of being an externalizer is being really freaking mean to ourselves. I know that default lives inside me for sure, and while thought work, coaching, and somatics have helped me to quiet that voice's desire to speak and have helped me to believe that mean inner critic less and less, that gremlin in our minds eating pizza after dark, that voice is still there within me because I am just a human humaning along.

And that voice wants me to judge me as harshly as I used to judge others. That voice takes every mistake it sees me making or thinks I might make and makes it into an inditement of my worth as an animal. That voice that beats me up and puts me down and hurts me time and again because it believes there's something inherently wrong with me is not a kind voice.

And I've done so much work in the last 15 years to make peace with that voice, to befriend it. And it's still there because it's a part of me. And what I know for sure is that that voice is not the voice of loving kindness. It's the voice of ruminating in the past or future tripping, the voice of worry, fear, and shame.

And what I get to do, what you get to do is to be in conversation with it, to keep giving that voice, that part of ourselves, that inner protector, so much love and care. So much understanding and a grace, and to keep moving towards showing that part kindness, kindness within yourself, kindness in the world.

So let's talk about how we experience others and their choices to be either nice or kind. Let's start with simple niceness. I know when I got out of a

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relationship where there wasn't much niceness or kindness, my standards were super low.

I understood a new date or a friend being a responsible, helpful adult as being this magnificent thing because I had come to expect so little in the world because I'd gotten so little in my previous relationship. For example, a date was over recently, we were cooking, and I took the garbage out. And when I came back, they had replaced the garbage bag.

And in that moment, oh my God, it was like they had parted the Red Sea. That simple act, which was so nice and came from a place of interdependent mutuality, from true kindness, felt huge to me because I'd spent so long accepting crumbs and expecting to do everything myself because I was not being met with kindness.

So something for you to investigate in your life, my beauty. Do you expect kindness? Are you getting kindness in your relationships? What does it feel like to receive and I mean really receive, let in acts of kindness? Are your standards so low that the smallest act of kindness feels monumental? If so, what is up in your life that that's what's going on for you?

Are your standards so high and this tracks with avoidant attachment often that you brush off acts of kindness and don't let the beauty in? Likewise, something to look at and witness for yourself, my darling love.

As externalizers with our chronic thought habits, we do a lot of storytelling about others. See, the way our unmanaged brains work, a.k.a this is your brain not on thought work, we project our own story of how we believe others should be acting on to them based on how we act, which of course is guided by our feelings and our feelings come from our thoughts.

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We talked about this in detail in episode 20, which feels like about a bajillion years ago, about our how-to manuals for other humans, so I'll invite you to give that one a listen later to refresh your memory about these should stories. Why we do them, and how to pause on that one.

When we live a life in which we should on everyone around us, and simultaneously chronically put ourselves out for others, put their needs ahead of our own, we do so because we secretly or come on, not so secretly, want other people to put themselves out for us.

That's us should-ing on them. We expect them to do the same. We expect them to treat themselves with as little respect and care and love and kindness as we give to ourselves. And obviously my beauty, this isn't a conscious process. We just call this a belief system because that's what it is.

Remembering that a belief is a thought you've thought over and over and over again until it feels like a fact in your mind, even one just below your consciousness. So let's use a real life example.

So my client, Maria Jose, she goes by Majo, was telling me that she was so pissed off at her girlfriend because her girlfriend said she didn't have time to help her with a project. Majo said to me, "I always stop what I'm doing to help her, even when I'm really focused or busy or don't even want to, because being nice is really important to me and it pisses me off she didn't do the same for me."

Here, Majo's girlfriend stated her capacity, her limit that she couldn't help Majo in this one moment. And of note, this isn't a chronic pattern of just giving breadcrumbs, of not showing up for Majo. It was a discreet incident.

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And Majo got upset because she was projecting what she would expect herself to do from that trope of niceness based in her habit of people-pleasing and codependent thinking, on to her girlfriend. And she shoulded all over her.

She expected, wanted, and told the story that she needed her to put herself out so that Majo could be less anxious and could source safety from someone else choosing to be nice instead of being kind. Because her girlfriend was being kind here, right?

She evaluated her own capacity, she checked in with herself, got an understanding of what she could and couldn't offer, and then set a limit. And my beauty, saying no is kind. It's relationship and resentment prevention and it's vital because all of our shit gets stirred up in relationship and gets healed in relationship.

So it's critical that we look at how we show up and how we relate to others, what we expect of others, what we project onto them from our own stories of what being nice, being a doormat in this situation, what being kind, evaluating your capacity, speaking your truth, living into your authenticity means.

So what we do is we confuse niceness and kindness in all of our relationships, which sets us up to resent other people when we do things we don't want to do for them, from that story that being nice is everything. And the beauty is as always that change is so possible, my love.

Our brains have neuroplasticity, it means we really, really can break free from these codependent and people-pleasing ways of being by learning to manage our own minds. Learning thought work and using this tool to change our habitual stories, while also learning somatic work, learning how to get in touch with our physical felt experience of nice and kind.

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And when we do so, we can step into our own capacity to live from kindness and to expect kindness in return. Reciprocity and mutuality are beautiful things and are the bedrock of healthy, interdependent relationships, which is always my goal. More interdependence, more better, right?

So my sweet kittens, you haven't gotten homework in a minute and I know my nerds missed their assignments, so here's the invitation. The way we do. Awareness, acceptance, action.

So it starts with watching yourself with gentle kindness. No beating you up please. Noticing in your mind and so importantly in your body when you're acting from the energy of nice, of people pleasing, of trying to look good to others externally when your focus is outward versus inward.

Notice that versus the moments when you're living from kindness. Acting nicely, living with kindness, allowing kindness to resonate in your body for you and all of humanity. Not to attempt to make someone think or feel or act the way you want them to.

Notice when you're moving through the world in a way that aligns with your integrity, your truth, a way that honors your needs and invites others to express and own theirs. Meeting them when and where you can and saying no thank you, I'm not available, when that's what's kind to you. When that is what will prevent resentment down the road.

Notice as well when your unkind inner critic turns on and give that voice love and care. Reassure it instead of pushing it away. Love it up. I really want to invite you to start practicing being kind to that unkind voice within you. You can't heal hurt with more hurt, right, my darling? So choose kindness and compassion instead.

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That voice loves you even when it doesn't sound or feel like it does. It believes it's protecting you. It thinks it's being kind and you get to both acknowledge that it's not and love it for trying in its own way.

And remember, we act from kindness because it's who we are. Not to try to gain anything. Not with the goal of our kindness being reciprocated. We choose kindness because it's a part of our essential human task and that is something worth living into as you move further away from your codependent thought habits and into greater and greater self-love.

My beauty, if this episode and all of *Feminist Wellness* is resonating for you, if you are ready to make these changes and to live a life you love, more kindness is your guiding north star where your passion and your joy are everything.

Where you're less anxious, less worried, less sad, and frustrated, when you no longer spend your life looking at what everyone else is doing, trying to manage and manipulate and control them to feel safe, and instead, if you're ready to feel that embodied safety within you and to get my guidance in community for six months, to make these new thought patterns, somatic patterns your truth, to make these new cassette tapes of self-love and kindness in community, your cassette tapes, you're going to want to join us for Anchored.

It's a six-month program in which we talk about codependency, perfectionism, people pleasing, build self-esteem, self-worth, positive self-regard and self-confidence. Where we take our minds and our bodies back from the patriarchy, from our socialization, and our conditioning, and I would love to have you join us.

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Head on over to victoriaalbina.com/anchored. Fill out the short form now. You've got nothing to lose. And you could find yourself on a call with me to talk more about the program. I really truly look forward to it.

Alright my sweet beauties, let's do what we do. If it feels loving and supportive, place a gentle hand on your beautiful heart. I want to invite you to breathe in kindness. Deep breath in, long slow out. Give your nervous system some love with that slow exhale.

And 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, 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.