

Ep #136: Getting Anchored: Living with Intention



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, I am absolutely delighted to share episode 84, Living with Intention, with you once more.

I chose to re-share this episode today because so many of us have lived a life in which we live from obligation, where we go from thing to thing, not really being present in our lives, living from the neck up, overthinking, worrying, ruminating, not being here, now, in this one moment that we are promised.

And we've been talking a lot about how to overcome our codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thinking, how to understand our attachment theory, how to resource our nervous systems, and one of the beautiful gifts of doing this work is that we start to live our lives for us.

Me first, you second, with love. We learn to say my wants, my needs, my life, my goals, my dreams, they matter. And so I'm going to take action for me. I'm going to set boundaries for me. I'm going to say yes to the things that light me up, that bring me joy and passion and I'm going to say a very kind no to the things that don't bring me joy, to the things that don't work for me in my life because my life matters too.

And so at the core of that is living with intention. Living in presence. And so without further ado, I bring you this really lovely episode all about how you can live your life with greater intention, greater presence, greater awareness, acceptance, and so you can take aligned action to make your

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life the life you dream of. Keep listening, my love, it's going to be a good one.

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This week, we're going to talk about what it means to live with intention, to make decisions for yourself and your life on purpose and ahead of time.

Over in my six-month masterclass, *The Feminist Wellness Guide to Overcoming Codependency*, a member of the family over there, and I say family because it really does feel like a family. It's so beautiful. This human shared about being worried about going on a first date because historically, she would meet someone, that person would like her, and she would feel like, okay, fine about them.

But then, and I do quote, "It was like boom, I would wake up a year later and I was in this relationship and I don't remember really choosing it. It just always sort of happens." And I hear this all the time, phrases like, "I don't know where my day went," or, "I can't believe I've been in this job for like, five years now. How did that happen?"

And this is such a common experience for folks with codependent and people-pleasing thought habits because so often, we've spent a lifetime trying to please others, to attempt to keep them happy, going along to get along.

And we've been so outwardly focused, so externally motivated that we've turned our attention away from ourselves and what we truly want. We live our lives on autopilot, passively moving along instead of pausing to ask if we're living our lives for us, with intention. If we're living our lives on our own terms on purpose.

And I want to acknowledge that this topic is a huge one and it's so much more than one podcast episode can cover. And so it's one of the core

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things we work on in the masterclass. So if you're interested in learning more about the course, head over to victoriaalbina.com/masterclass.

The group starting in September is full, so there's a waitlist for the next offering, TBD. But if you want to find out more, please do. It would be such a delight to have you join us. So my beauty, I want to share a bit more about my own experience with this theme, but first, nerd alert.

In a recent study of 3000 people in the UK, 96% reported living on autopilot with the average person making 15 mindless decisions each and every day. Over the course of a lifetime, this adds up to a quarter of a million autopilot decisions made minimum.

So many of us are living from our lizard brains, from that oldest part of us that upholds the motivational triad of mammalian life. To seek pleasure, avoid pain, and maintain biological efficiency, which you'll remember, my nerd, means not to change a darn thing in life that hasn't killed you yet if you can help it.

Your lizard brain is a loving, caring part of you and just wants you to survive, but there's the rub. It just wants you to survive, and frankly, not do much else. Eat, sleep, hydrate, procreate, repeat. Those are its imperatives, its goals.

In modern times, that can also look like upholding the societal and cultural and familial standards and expectations you were taught. And especially for humans socialized as women, we're taught that we should be good girls, quiet girls, pretty and thin and not have dirt on our faces or be rough-housing with the boys, that we should get married and have kids, and that's the plan. Oh, probably have a career too.

And babies, my sweet babies, nothing wrong with that plan. Not any part of it if you consciously, intentionally choose it. But if there's a part of your brain that's beating you up for being, mon dieu, 30 and not married, or 34

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without children, have you paused to ask yourself if you actually want this whole big old plan or why?

Your amygdala, the fear sensor in your brain isn't a huge fan of you deviating from the plan we've all been taught in our own special way because it leaves you exposed to criticism, to being ostracized, and told you're effing up. You're doing life wrong. You're not measuring up, you're a failure of a mammal. The old compare and despair.

And remember, way back in the day, not fitting in was really actually for realies dangerous because if your fellow cave humans didn't like your choices, you could be literally left out of the village to die on your own. From a polyvagal nervous system framing, not being in ventral vagal, the safe and social connected part of our nervous system with your family and community is also dangerous and downright dumb.

Sticking out, not fitting in, all of this can leave your nervous system feeling all frayed at the edges. So we work to fit in, to feel safe and social and protected, and it makes sense. And frankly, and to put it elegantly, it sucks at the same time because not all of us want what's prescribed for us by the forces outside of ourselves, and few of us stop to ask if we really believe the hype, if we want what we've been taught to want, or if we want something widely different. A life lived with intention on our own terms.

And when your lizard brain is the boss, then buffering, or doing anything and everything you can to not feel your feelings or to attempt to push them away is the obvious plan. To wake up, often exhausted, work at the office all day, I mean, kitchen table for most of us.

And pre-work from home, to do the things that it took to get along, to not feel like the odd one out at the office. To laugh at jokes you don't find funny, to eat a cupcake for someone's birthday, even though it's going to give you a belly ache and wicked brain fog. But your brain says, your

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socialization says it would be rude not to and you were raised not to be rude, so you do it.

Day in and day out, and then you go home, eat whatever's available, quick and easy and collapse in front of your TV with your buffer of choice.

Perhaps a nice quarantini. And that, my beautiful love, is unintentional living. Exhausting yourself to get the grades, to get the college acceptance, to get the job, to get the raise, to get the promotion, to what? Die having gone through the motions?

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with those choices. Never ever. I mean, I did it too. And baby, you do you. But that's the point. You get to do you. Not you get to do what you were told that you should want to do. And your intuition is the most important barometer here. Your guide to whether you're living from default or by design.

And this topic is particularly pertinent to folks with codependent and perfectionist thought habits because those habits leave you, us really, so detached from your own wants, needs, desires, preferences, capacity to make bold decisions or decisions in general like what's for dinner or what should I wear.

So detached from your capacity to take courageous action that we defer decision making. Put it off, procrastinate, get 473 opinions from other people before charting a course for ourselves, before hitting send, before saying yes or no, before investing, before moving forward.

And my goal here on the show and in the work I do is to support you in learning how to do it differently. How to live your life with intention. My love, I feel like I work up at 30. I had moved to San Francisco to start nurse practitioner school at UCSF and had the good fortune or so I called it at the time, I now realize it was more cosmic than that, but I fell in with some particularly amazing humans.

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Ones that were dedicated to learning, growing, doing life differently, healing from their childhoods and living their adult lives with intention. Those years spent processing, working through things, talking it out, reading, meditating, going on beach walks with this group of incredible humans has been one of the greatest gifts of my life.

Looking back before then, I had dated so many people just because they wanted to date me. Same with jobs. Same with moving cities. Life overall in a lot of ways. I hadn't lived those first 30 years with intention. And I'd been dedicated to learning how and practicing doing it ever since I had that awakening.

And for me, living with intention means living your life on purpose and making decisions big and small from an aligned, thoughtful, self-loving place. Once again, not just doing what we've been taught or what friends or strangers on the social medias are doing and measuring ourselves against them.

But instead, really getting in touch with what I want and taking action towards that goal for me because this is my one human life to live this time around, and I'm here for it. So totally here for it. And the reason I didn't do it for so long is largely due to my own codependent, people-pleasing, and perfectionist thought habits.

And once I got wise to that, I kept on doing what other people said was the next right thing because frankly, it was super scary to jump off that emotional hamster wheel and to say I was doing it my way, thank you very much. What makes that shift so scary is the possibility of failure, of doing it wrong. And especially of getting called out on doing it wrong.

Someone else not liking my choices or decisions, someone else telling me I effed up my life, or god forbid, upset or disappointed someone else. And as always, the deepest perfectionist fear underneath it all was that I was going to be mean to myself if I didn't like the outcome I created.

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So if I wasn't actually actively choosing my life, maybe I was less likely to beat myself up for whatever became of my life. Such disempowering thinking. And yeah, it came from a beautiful self-protective place, but wow, what became of my life? As though I wasn't the architect of it, as though I had no choice in the matter.

Fascinating, right? And what I've come to realize is how dishonest I was being, not on purpose. It's not like I was actively, consciously lying to myself and people I loved. I just wasn't pausing to look at my own mind because I didn't have the tools and I didn't know I needed them, so I had no clue what I was creating in my life with my own thoughts, and I had no clue that I could live any other way.

I didn't know what taking radical responsibility for my life meant and felt like in my body. The reality of living with intention is that it's much. It's a lot. There are a lot of choices to make when you're living with intention. But seriously, a lot. But the thing is when you're living passively, just going along with other people's wants or desires, you're making choices too and that's the rub.

You're making the choice to just go along. And the thing is I'd so much rather step into my own agency and to make those choices actively and to know that I am making and building and living in a life of my own choosing, rather than not to. Because that old way of living, where it felt like life was happening to me is now just untenable.

It feels all squirmy and uncomfortable. And to go all former hospice nurse about it, not a single one of the dying folks who I had the honor of caring for ever looked at me at 3am and said, "You know what Vic, I'm so glad I worked in that job I never liked for all those years, stayed married to that dude I fell out of love with for the kids' sake and never wrote my novel, never danced in the kitchen because I was scared someone would make fun of me for it, never followed my dreams. I'm really stoked about that."

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And it's a challenging question but you know I like posing challenging questions because I love you. My beauty, what do you want to be able to say you chose with intention for yourself when you're on your deathbed? But seriously, take a moment to consider it. Pause the show. I'll wait.

Do you want to say you did the PhD because you believed in yourself? Or do you want to say that you did it to please others and because your parents expected it? Same with your daily nutrition choices, your fashion, your partnerships, your marriage, having kids or not, all of it.

And my darling, I want to invite you to get wildly radically honest with yourself about what you want, what you're passionate about, and to allow yourself to go for it. Not to hold back because it sounds too out there, because someone else might not like it.

Now, I'm not telling you to quit your day job and to burn it all down, though, I mean, go for it if you're so called. But rather to start living life on your own terms in the little ways. The way you keep your eye on your own version of the prize, to bring your attention to your own heart, your mind, wishes, desires, your intentions for your life.

And yes, there's so much privilege in these kinds of conversations so you know I'm always going to call it out. Many, many, many people the world over have to work at jobs that they not only don't like but are dangerous on so many levels. That's super real. Many people's choices are limited in so many ways, and I'm never ever out here toeing that Horatio Alger's pull yourself up by the bootstraps kind of BS. Never ever.

That literally serves no one. Being conscious of reality and naming it, that does. That is important. And simultaneously, I don't want you to hear me saying that and be like, well, then I don't get to suffer, I don't get to choose my path because I do have a "good job" or decent relationship. It's never the suffering Olympics for me.

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It's more like, if you have the privilege to be in a place to shift your life with ease, to not need to work two to three jobs, or work in a salt mine for a living or whatever, then that's something phenomenal and worth celebrating, worth living into with intention and dedication, honoring your privilege.

So you can fill your own cup and then be of service to the world. And we'll dive into the difference between being of service and people pleasing in an upcoming episode, so make sure you're subscribed to the show. You're not going to want to miss that one.

Alright my beauty, let's talk antidotes. Intention is attention. Awareness, always our first step in this family. Where your mind goes, energy flows. I talk a lot about being your watcher, getting deeply mindful. That is bringing your attention to your daily choices and engaging in a wholehearted way in whatever you're doing.

Getting present, not rolling along on autopilot. You can make tea with intention. You can date with intention. You can calendar, watch TV, have sex, move your body, clean your dog's poop, all with intention. Awareness. On and on, that intention and awareness are always available to you.

Or you can choose to live your life on autopilot and it's important to check in with yourself about the things you do without considering them, like how many of you open your social media or email within milliseconds of waking up? What about having coffee first thing in the morning on an empty belly, or alcohol most evenings without questioning whether these choices make your body feel good or do funky things you'd prefer to skip to your mood?

What about the habit of getting defensive as a knee-jerk reaction, or thinking that it's your fault, whatever it is and taking life personally? What about the habits of people pleasing, putting other people's joy above your own?

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These habits are likely unintentional and generally don't serve us, my beautiful love. And when I'm talking about living with intention, I mean stopping to ask yourself, do I really want to be doing this thing? Is it really aligned for me?

And being an adult totally doesn't mean doing 110% enjoyable things all the time. The garbage needs to go out, once again, that dog poop, it needs scooped. The taxes need paid, and if you're an entrepreneur, there are one bajillion things to do in a day that aren't like, oh my god you guys, this is so fun.

It's not about that. It's about asking what results your actions are creating in your life, and if you want that result, asking yourself if you like the reason why you're doing whatever it is you're doing. And honestly, when those less enjoyable things are clearly in the service of my larger wellness, joy, reaching my goals, they can be a lot more pleasant, or at the least a lot less unpleasant.

And I've found that I can do them without the resentment I used to have when I recognize and have the thought that I'm doing them for me. And not that I have to. Asking yourself why, like the real driving why you're doing a thing is a great question to write down and to post somewhere where you can see it so you can ask it of yourself and learn to hear and feel your body's response to it.

Do I like my reason why? It's been a powerful guide for me, that question. Probably deserves its own show. I will contemplate that. So the more present you are, the more awake and alive in your day to day life, the more capable you are of making decisions that serve you and taking courageous action for your life, chop wood, carry water.

And it supports you in having the kinds of relationships I know you want to have where there is mutually and reciprocity, interdependence. Not codependence. And you can show up for that when your focus is on being

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attentive to what's really happening, and not what you're worried someone else is thinking or feeling.

When you're not projecting your fears and worries onto them, when you're not numbed out and disconnected but really listening with love and a full, open heart. Aware, attentive, intentional. And it's not about snapping your fingers and boom, you live this whole life with 110% laser-focused attention, intention.

I see you, you sweet perfectionist little sweet potato. I know you like to learn a new thing and then obsess about it and attempt to be 110% perfect about it and bully yourself into doing it perfectly. And that's the thing; there is no prescribed perfect here. No right way to do this. The goal is to tune into yourself, to learn what you really want under all the conditioning and socialization, to prioritize that one breath at a time.

So it starts with awareness, mindfulness, and the next step is planning. Using that amazing prefrontal cortex of yours, my nerd, to consciously decide what your life is going to be like, to plan your days, weeks, months, to not give your time and attention and power away, but to say I own my time, my thoughts, my feelings. I'm not going to just let the day happen. I'm going to take ownership here.

And maybe your brain is screaming, "But I have a job, or kids who are now home 24/7," whatever the story is. And true enough, we do all have things outside of us that request our time and attention, and within those frameworks, you do still have choice.

I talked a lot about this in episode 16. You don't have to, you get to. Again, privilege at work, totally. And no matter what the day and the kids and the job and the relationship request of you during the day, you get to choose not to spend your evening watching two to three hours of TV and zoning out the second the kids are asleep.

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You don't have to continue to numb out, though please, of course, I get it. When trauma, stress, and overwhelm are up and active, it's so tempting to buffer, to numb out. And while yes, it's incredibly healthy to pause and decide to take a break, I want to invite you to do that consciously, intentionally as well.

As always, I love it when things are super actionable for you, so here are some guiding questions. What do I want my life to be like? What are my wildest dreams for my own life? That is, if there were no barriers in the whole wide world, what would I like this life to look like? What are my intentions for my life? My day, my week, my month, my year.

Take the time to look at every aspect of your life, to make this work truly holistic. Your job, career, work life, romance, other relationships, family, movement, nutrition, health, all of it. What are your intentions for each aspect of your life?

Where am I saying no to myself? To try to make someone else happy? Where am I saying yes to someone else when it's not what I truly want for myself? How do I want to make my mark on the world? What dreams and visions do I want to turn into reality? What can I do each and every day to begin to build trust in and with myself?

Remember, small things are the perfect ones to start with, a la minimum baseline, episode 78. How do I want to spend my time? Focused on the task or challenge in front of me, or future tripping? Spinning in the past, or do I want to get really present and intentional?

What are the mental and emotional barriers holding me back? Now, I'll invite you to get really detailed and run it all through the thought work protocol. Name the circumstance, your thoughts about it, the feeling those thoughts generate, the action you take and the results you create for yourself.

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Get really detailed here, my darling love. And do it with outstanding enthusiasm, gentleness, and self-love. If you need to make a prudent choice at this stage of your life, like to stay at a job you don't love for now because money, health insurance, et cetera, then that's what you're doing.

Meanwhile, while that part of your life isn't changing for now, you get to accept that and to focus your attention on how else you can bring awareness and intention into your life. What about drinking your coffee slowly while noticing your breath? What about walking one extra stop after getting off the subway or the bus with your phone away? Looking at the world around you and really taking it in.

What about making a plan with a friend because you've been saying you want to and you're ready to stop wanting it and to start getting it? What about intentionally going to bed earlier, waking up earlier, doing your daily journaling or thought work?

What can you easily shift that is completely within your control in this moment, while you're still working that job you don't want to work, or otherwise doing what's necessary in life in this moment? And then you get to make a plan. I'll encourage it to be a realistic one, and you get to lovingly encourage yourself to hold to it each and every day without guilt or shame or being mean to you. Just nice and soft and loving and encouraging, as your own best parent.

A life lived with intention and self-direction is so gratifying. And it can be yours, my darling one. Start with awareness, acceptance of what is, what isn't working, what's holding you back, and then start moving into action. You got this, my sweet one.

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

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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.