

Ep #140: Honoring Your No



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 are talking all about honoring your no. Over in Anchored, my six month program for overcoming codependent perfectionism and people pleasing thinking, one of the fun things we do is we have a Slack group, which is a group messaging platform. There's all these fun channels where the folks in Anchored can connect with each other, can build community, can get to know each other. And of course can get coached by me every weekday for six months, which is so phenomenal. It's so much fun.

One of the channels I most love is the one where we make purposely ridiculous requests so we can collectively practice asking for what we want, accepting hearing no from others and not taking it personally, and we can practice saying no. And can experience that not just being totally okay and fine but applauded, right. Like a thing to celebrate because it's actually the assignment.

So I'd like to start by sharing some of my favorite requests for help. This one makes me giggle before I even start reading it. "Urgent! Urgent! Urgent! I am out of almond butter, and I want it now. Will one of you please grow organic almonds, then harvest, dry, roast, and grind them, and then drive them to my house immediately. Because this is urgent for me."

The next one is, "I would love you forever if you could please take care of all my emotional needs this week. Who's game?" "Hey, can one of you please take my t-rex to the vet tomorrow at 3:00 a.m.? He has a bellyache and will likely yak all over your car. I'd really appreciate the help. You know I'd do it for you. Thank you." "My kids have nits." Which I was like wait,

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what are nits? It's lice. Bleh, lice. "Will someone please come to my place in New Zealand and de-nit the children and wash every scrap of fabric in the house today? Thank you."

The requests go on and on, right. The folks in Anchored really take this opportunity to work on themselves, and to work on building these habits. What's been so amazing about having the space to ask for help and to practice saying and hearing no is what it's stirred up in the Anchored family.

One member writes, "Okay now. This channel is wild. It's stirring so much up inside me. I would like to get to a place where 'no.' becomes a full sentence. However, my entire life's training has led me to a bodily rejection of saying no to something I'm perfectly capable of doing and don't want to. Keep posting your requests peeps because wow. I want to keep practicing with y'all."

Another writes, "It is absolutely mind blowing for me how much resistance comes up from my inner children around saying no to what are admittedly total nos for me. The more I practice it here, the more I feel safe to be me, it really is getting easier. Guess this neuroplasticity and reparenting thing really works, huh?" Yes, it does my darling. Yes, it does.

The truth is that for us, honoring ourselves, our wants, needs, capacities, desires is often at the bottom of the list of things we do from our codependent framework. So much so that it's a whole mood over in Anchored. It's something vital for us to talk about here on *Feminist Wellness*. So let's dive in. You know me. I'd love to start with a pep talk.

My darling, even if saying no, feeling your wants and needs in your body, hearing them in your mind and acting on them has felt challenging for a lifetime, you really can learn to know what you want and to voice it. Truly. Like for realsies. You can shift that neural groove in your mind that says, "I

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must put others first.” You can rewrite it to say, “Me first, you second, with love.”

You can honor yourself and your communities and the collective. You can live an intentional and deeply radically honest life. You can live from your integrity, and you can retrain your mind body so that saying no when you mean it feels as easy as saying, “Yes, of course I’ll do that for you,” does now. Let’s talk about why we say yes when we don’t want to.

From our codependent thought habits, we don’t believe in our inherent worth until someone else says “good girl” to us. We want others to validate us. So we say yes for that momentary ping of external approval. We are so used to putting ourselves last that it feels normal and easier and frankly safer in our mind body than having our own backs. So of course we say yes to being the room parent while working a full time job and rescuing six puppies. Of course we do. Others need us.

We forget in those moments that we need us to. It’s like we think we have endless capacity because it feels safer to our inner children to assume that. We forget that we’re humans that need to eat and drink water and rest and recharge. So we just say yes, yes, yes to everything and everyone. Keep strengthening that neural groove in our minds that say, “My needs come last always. This is the way to be loved.”

We also believe that it’s our job to manage everyone else’s feels for them, which is a paternalistic world view that we don’t see as such because it’s been so conflated with being nice in our lives. So instead of being honest, instead of being truthful, instead of saying, “No, I’m not available,” we try to manage other people’s feelings for them. Which we know, as students of the Thought Work Protocol and the Think, Feel, Act Cycle is simply not possible. Other people’s feelings come from their own thoughts.

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So what we can manage is our own thoughts, our feelings, our actions, the results and outcomes we create for ourselves. We take it on as our job, as our raison d'être on this planet to manage other people's feels for them. I don't want him to feel sad. So I'll just do it. I don't want them to be upset. So I'll say yes.

What we don't realize is in so doing not only are we acting in a way that hurts us by putting us chronically last, it's harmful to the people around us because it doesn't give them the opportunity to manage their own lives, their own minds, their own feelings. To learn how to show up for themselves and experience the discomfort that's a part of life, the disappointment, the complexity of human feelings that makes us complex and amazing human animals.

From our perfectionist thought habits, a symptom of our codependent habits, we want to look like we can do everything always and be all things to all people. We subconsciously fear what we think others will think of us if we are actual mortal humans, not actually capable of doing all of the things all of the time.

As always, what belies perfectionist thinking is the fear that we will judge ourselves for being humans. That's the real fear. While the story that we fear what others will think of us is often the cover up thought. For the fear we have that we will be really, really mean to us if we can't do all the things and decide that it's okay to take time for us, to take space for our own selves.

From our people pleasing thought habits, a symptom of our codependent habits, we are scared of letting others down, of disappointing them. We deeply fear conflict because we generally don't trust ourselves to have our own backs and to prioritize ourselves when the risk is someone not being pleased with us in the decision we are making to take care of ourselves. We would rather avoid potential conflict by not being truthful or honest and

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saying no. Instead we say yes, yes, yes when asked because we know that no one is pleased to hear the word no.

We believe that it is our job to keep other people happy. So we go along and we say, "Of course I'll help you move on Saturday." Then the day of instead of saying no and speaking our truth, we come back with, "Well, actually something came up, and I'm sorry I can't make it." Or some other excuse.

But see how most of us didn't even say no thought? Right? We come up with some excuse, something that we think will explain our way, our inability to be there. Because of course we really wanted to be, but actually we didn't really want to be at all. It's sneaky, and we don't even realize we're doing it.

And remember. As always, when I talk about people pleasing and that internal driver that says, "I want people to like me," I'm never ever saying that's a bad thing because it's not. It's a very human thing. We are pack animals, after all, and have the survival mechanism built in of wanting to be liked. Wanting to feel part of the in group because it makes us feel safer when the lions eventually come to devour the village.

The question to ask yourself is if you're calling other people liking you over you liking you. If the answer is yes, then that's something to look at my darling. I'll invite you to look at episode 67, 68, and 70 for more on people pleasing and how to break out of that painful cycle.

From our people pleasing habits, we also expect people to live their lives the same way we do. Prioritizing people pleasing over pleasing ourselves. We want and expect others to put themselves out because we put ourselves out. And because the inner story goes, "They don't love me if they say no to this request," we expect ourselves to say yes when we don't want to because that's our framework for living. Constantly acting from obligation not actual desire. Of course we've got resentful on the backend, right.

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So we say yes from this subconscious desire for other people to put themselves out for us. It's like this unwritten unspoken internal psychic tug of war that leads us exhausted, annoyed, put out, and resentful when we're operating from the mental cassette tape of our socialization, conditioning, and survival skills. Especially as human socialized as women.

So many of us are taught that we are valuable in good girls, helpful and worthy, when we put ourselves last. When we are selfless instead of that terrible thing known as selfish. We are taught that we are a value, and we do what our families want versus what we want. What society wants. Because if we prioritize ourselves, we are labeled as selfish. What could be worse in the patriarchy than a woman who has a real sense of self and values herself, right.

Finally, it's challenging to say no when honest self-loving living wasn't modeled for us. When we grew up in a family structure with a family blueprint where obligation, codependent thinking, people pleasing, and being liked by others, being seen in a certain light were prioritized over being direct and saying what's real for you.

So you get to bring compassion, love, and care in for the parts of you that may be saying I don't know how to do this. Or that it's scary. It's okay for those parts to be scared. You get to give them love and care. You get to resource your nervous system around this, and you get to reparent your inner children. To decide that it's truly okay to take care of yourself and to say yes and no when you want to. You get to feel that ping of fear in your belly, and you get to decide to take care of you anyway. To take action for your one beautiful, amazing human life anyway.

Now listen. I'm not saying we don't do things for others or don't show up for our family, friends, and community. I am all about being of service. I'm all about healing ourselves for ourselves and so we can come correct to our communities. To that end, I'm saying that the thoughts and feelings that we bring into that moment of saying yes or no is so vitally important.

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So, let's talk about the trope of obligation, right. Because so often we make decisions in our lives because we feel obliged to do so. Let's put it into the Thought Work Protocol using the Think, Feel, Act Cycle we detailed in episodes 35, 36, and 37 and reviewed in detail in episode 107.

As a felt sense, obligation within my feelings like, just feeling into it, it feels like constriction. As I feel into my body, I feel tense in my belly and my chest. Now there's like a lump of tightness in my throat. It feels heavy, dense, dark like it's pulling me down and inward. Oof. Obligation feels yucky.

So let's say there's a family gathering, and you're all up in your feels about it. So I'm going to share two different thoughts that you could bring into a situation, and let's just feel into it. Okay? So I want to invite you to feel into the difference in your body between the old cassette tape thought from obligation, from has to, from not believing that you can make your own choices in life.

It might sound like, "I don't want to go to that birthday party. But if I don't go, my mom will be so disappointed. I don't want to make her feel bad. I know there'll be all this pressure to eat the sugar or gluten, and I know that that aunty is going to make all these comments about my body. I don't want to go. I have to go. I mean it's family, after all. I can't just not go, right?" That train of thought, "I am obliged to do things I don't want to do," makes you feel all anxious and put upon. Resentful and annoyed and just ugh.

So you go to the party, and you clearly don't want to be there. You act the way you feel, irritated. You create this boatload of yuck for yourself and others at the party because humans can feel other human's energies. People know when you're pretending to be okay and when you would rather be like pretty much anywhere else on the planet other than where you are.

So the result of going into this experience from that place of obligation and from those heavy have to thoughts, the result is a lousy experience for you

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and likely for the people you. The people you claim to be showing up for. It's not a cute scene, my darling. Not cute at all.

So let's try another tack here. So you sit with yourself. You hear all those old cassette tapes. You honor them. You give them space. You give them airtime. You let them play out. You write them down and work the Thought Work Protocol on them. Having seen them in black and white, you decide you're going to go while remembering that you have agency and are making an active choice for yourself.

So you may choose to think, "I am going to show up at this family birthday party because I love my family, and it matters to me to show up. That's one of my values, and I will make this choice intentionally. I will practice loving self-care before, during, and after. I will set a time limit for how long I will be there, and I will go prepared, scripts in hand, to set clear, kind limits and boundaries. If that tía comments on my body, I will let her know I'm not available for that. If my dad pressures me to eat gluten, I will let him know I'm not doing that. I will go because I want to show up, and I will take care of myself as my own most loving parent while I'm there."

This is an example of thought work in action, my love. Here the action you take is the same, saying yes to going to the party. By changing your thoughts, you create new feelings. Here feelings like empowerment, agency, self-love, and trust. So you go to the party full up with those feelings and you're able to show up as the you you like best. The self-assured, self-confident you who knows their boundaries and is living them.

The result? You have a perfectly good time, stay for the amount of time that feels right for you, and leave when you are ready to with less guilt feeling happy and having connected with your family in a way that's respectful and loving of everyone involved. How amazing is that?

You can do the exact same scenario with a thoughtful, embodied, aligned no. You can do the thought work to drop the guilt, to drop the shame, and to decide to say no because you want to honor you. Because honoring you,

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taking care of you is a vital gift that you're ready to give yourself and the people you love.

Because honoring your yes and your no is vital community care. It is not loving towards your family, your friends, your activist circle, your colleagues to say yes when you don't mean it. To then show up in annoyance or frustration, grumpy you're at the party, unhappy to be where you kneejerk said you would be when you don't actually want to go to there. To resent the people you love or care about. It's not kind. It's not loving.

Sure, it might look nice or polite on the service. But it's not truly an act of community love and care to do what you don't want to do and to then have grumpers feels about it that you may direct towards a person who did nothing more than ask you if you were available to do something. It's also not a loving choice to chronically say yes all the time until you burn out and are then of service to no one and nothing.

For a reminder on the difference between being nice and being kind, check out episode 132. That was a good one. So my darlings, we have detailed the problem. Let's talk remedies and let's get practical. Your girl is a nurse, after all, and we are a practical bunch.

It is so common to not know what you want after a lifetime of denying your wants. Totally normal. No shame about that needed. Not at all. So when you're not sure if you want to say yes or no, you can pause. You can start by feeling into your body. Darling, take a beat if you need to. If someone asks you to do something, you can say, "I'll get back to you." If they're asking you in person, you can excuse yourself to the bathroom or whatever you need to do to create some space to truly be with yourself even for just a few breaths.

You can start in that moment to feel into your body, if that's safe and available for you, and you can scan your body for tension, for holding. You can try on the different decisions and can listen to your body's innate and powerful wisdom all the while remembering it's a practice to be able to hear

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ourselves, and this is a great way to get started and listen. Before you get frustrated with yourself, because you might do these exercises and hear nothing, remember that that's okay. I'll invite you to keep tuning into you. You're worth it my love.

If you'd like some practice with body scan meditations, I have a free download of exactly that on my website. Head on over to victoriaalbina.com/bodyscan-meditation. I'll put a link in the show notes. So you can head on over to victoriaalbina.com/140. That's the show page for this episode. You can find that link there.

So you took a beat. You took a breath. You tuned into your body. The other thing you can do to support yourself is to tune into your mind. You can ask yourself, "Do I want to do this thing, or would I be doing it for another reason? What's my motivation here? Am I trying to control how others think about me? Aka people pleasing. Or is this actually a thing that I'm interested in doing?"

What am I saying no to in my own life by saying yes to this request? How much energy do I have? Will saying yes fill up my cup or not? What's my self-care been like today, this week, this month, this pandemic? Am I tired or hungry? Sad, lonely, stressed, otherwise not fully in myself and present? If so, is this the right time to be saying yes to putting anything else on my plate? Is this offering in alignment with who I am and want to be in the world? My values, goals, and beliefs?"

So that's just a start. I'll invite you to get out pen and paper and come up with some other questions that help you to recognize what you want to say. If you want to say a true real from the heart yes or if you really do just want to say no thank you.

Once you know what you want to say, I want to invite you to remind yourself there is nothing to feel guilty about when you're choosing to take care of you. That you can say no in a loving, gentle, kind way, and you don't need to excuse or explain your no. You simply get to state it. Trusting

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that you're doing so from self-love and care for others. Remember, clear boundaries and limits are resentment prevention. Saying no upfront is a deep act of kindness for yourself and the people in your life.

Oh, and remember to be clear. "I don't know, maybe, maybe I could do it." Is not a loving answer my darling. Meanwhile, "No thank you," truly is. So what does it look like to say kind and loving nope? Well, it could sound like, "Thanks for the invite. I'm not available for that. Oh I'm not joining anymore book clubs right now. That's not going to work for me, thanks. I'm unable to help with that project. I'm not taking on any new projects right now."

When the person asking is beloved, we may think that we need to explain, justify, or excuse our no. While you really just don't ever need to do that, you can also remember that as challenging as it may be for you to say no, it can be really challenging for others to ask for help. So I like to pause for empathy, compassion, and community minded care. And to remind myself being asked to be of service is a gift, and I'm always grateful for the invitation even when I'm not available for it.

So instead of feeling bad for saying no, I can focus on the gratitude. "Thanks for asking. I'm delighted you thought of me. Oh it's lovely you'd like my thoughts on your resume. I'm honored you asked me to participate. And I'm not available for any of those offerings."

Finally, you can always offer what you are available for if you do want to be supportive in a way that works for you and presents post facto resentment on your side. "I can't stay over to help you the whole weekend. I could come Friday night until Saturday at noon. I'm not taking on new clients right now and can't make an exception for your cousin, but my colleague Molly is available. Want her info?"

"I'm not available to help with your move, and my neighbor's teenagers were looking for some gig work. Want me to connect you with them? Helping you rewrite your website doesn't fit into my schedule right now. I

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would be happy to look over your homepage if you can get it to me by end of the day on Friday.”

In all of these statements, you are having your own back. You're clearly and directly stating what you are and aren't available for. You're being kind to yourself and the people you love. That is an absolutely beautiful thing, my tender pumpkin ravioli.

In close, I want to remind you that it's totally okay, fine, important in fact for you to say no. It really is. Truly, truly, truly. It doesn't mean you're a bad or selfish person or that you're not generous or loving. Just the opposite really. I want to remind you that when you are saying yes to something you don't want to do, you're actually saying no to something you do want to do. I think we forget that.

When you're making cupcakes for the whole third grade class, you're not exercising. You're not journaling, resting, recharging in silence, or by talking to a friend. You're actually saying no to you. Or you're saying no to being of service in a way that feels more aligned for you when you say yes to something you don't want to do or don't have the capacity to do.

If there's anything we need to focus on in our journey to overcome codependency, it's learning what we actually want for ourselves and learning to honor those wants and needs. Because when our desires matter to us, we can show up as our most loving selves with ourselves and all the people in our lives.

Thanks for listening my love. Go on out there and say no this week. Set those limits, set those boundaries, honor yourself. If you're enjoying the show and everything you're learning here, please make sure to subscribe or follow the show wherever you get your podcasts. Leave a five star rating and a glowing review, and share on social media. When you're listening to the show, just snap a screenshot and put it online. Make sure to tag me because that's so super fun.

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The reason I ask you to do this is because this is a free resource that I want the whole world to hear. I want every human who sees codependent, perfectionist, and people pleasing thinking in their lives to get this free resource. So help me spread the word, won't you? You could also say no. That's totally available. Either way works my darling as long as it feels good for you.

Thanks for listening. Let's do what we do. Attune to your breath. Perhaps you take a nice breath in. Lungs slow out. Or perhaps you don't change your breath at all. Remember you are safe, you are held, you are loved. When one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well my darling. 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.