

**Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your  
Nervous System During the Holidays  
with Dana Monsees**



**Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

**Victoria Albina, NP, MPH**

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

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. Today, we're going to do something a little different, which is that I'm going to be sharing a conversation I recently had with my friend and colleague Dana Monsees.

She's a dietitian, nutritionist, and body image, body love coach, and she does phenomenal work to help folks both figure out what the best foods are for them, what nutrients support them, and drop the shame stories.

Drop the stories that can be so moralistic. Some foods are good, some foods are bad, some foods are healthy, unhealthy, clean, dirty, all of that is just stuff we can throw out the window. Instead, we can tune into our intuition, we can tune into what makes us actually feel good in our bodies.

And this is a quite apropro topic for today because today is turkey day, and for many of us in the US, we are gathering with friends, with family, with loved ones, and we're gathering over a meal.

And so that can mean a lot of talk about weight, about the pandemic changes in our bodies, about what we're choosing to eat, what we're not, and a lot of feels can come up, and a lot of thoughts can come up that we can use thought work around to really shift our mindsets and the ways we interact with ourselves, our image of self, our self-concept, and the ways we interact with the people we love.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

So Dana and I are diving into all of that and I'm so delighted to share this with you. And so today, I am grateful for this conversation, I'm grateful for all of you, and thank you. Thank you for listening in. I hope you enjoy this conversation.

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Victoria: Well hello, I am so excited to have you on the show today.

Dana: Hey friend. Thanks for having me.

Victoria: I'm so delighted that you are here. Would you take a moment to introduce yourself to the good people?

Dana: Yeah. My name is Dana Monsees. I am a dietitian, nutritionist, and body image coach. And I live in the Washington DC area, also known as occupied - in New Jersey we call it the Piscataway land. I'm actually not sure how to pronounce it correctly but someone please, gently remind me how to pronounce it. Because no matter where I look, everybody pronounces it differently, but yes, that's where I am.

Victoria: Fair enough. And what are your pronouns?

Dana: I'm she/her pronouns.

Victoria: Dope. Yeah, so we are here today, this show is going live on turkey day and I wanted to have you on, A, number one, because you're fabulous and number, B, number two, because I love talking to you.

## Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees

C, number three, because I thought who better than someone who is not only so well versed on all the nerd alert stuff that we love talking about on *Feminist Wellness*, but you are such an expert in body image and how we think about food and our relationship to food, our bodies, ourselves, and what better time for life to drive the trigger truck into our lives...

Dana: Than the holidays.

Victoria: Than the holidays. Being with family, particularly for those of us who haven't seen family in two years because pandemic, and yeah, just all the everything. All the baggage that can potentially come with the holidays. So what are you seeing in your clients and the people you work with?

Dana: I'm seeing a lot of anxiety and nervousness and kind of a sense of foreboding when it comes to the holidays and especially when, or if you're getting together with family or friends or whatever that you maybe haven't seen before the pandemic because, of course, the elephant in the room here is what did your body do during Covid? Did you pass or did you fail basically?

During the height of the pandemic and actually you were on my show in April 2020, so we were right in the middle of it. And we were already - not we, but other people, we're talking about the quarantine 15 and everything like that. So if that is a reality that has happened for you, it doesn't mean that you're a failure as a person, but by societal standards, it can definitely feel that way.

So it kind of feels like our body post-pandemic, whether it's changed or not, is a little bit of a report card on how well we did. And since there's so much

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

that's tied up between the association with health and body size and weight and everything in most people's minds who are not in the weight neutral, health at every size space, which we assume is 99% of people, is that when you come into these situations, it's pretty safe to assume that it is going to be a little bit of a trigger bus or a kind of hostile environment.

Because whether or not you actually experience those types of comments and conversations, you're already going in with your nervous system firing because you're expecting to have those conversations. So you're worrying about that maybe it's going happen, maybe you have some things planned to say, maybe you don't, and then maybe you're worrying about things to say.

But it's overall, we're just kind of in chronic sympathetic overdrive right now because we're worrying about what's going to happen, whether or not it's going to actually happen or not.

Victoria: Right. We go in with that pre-assumed stress. So what's your advice then? What's your coaching for folks who are sitting here, it's Thursday morning, and they may be going to see family or they're seeing folks for the December holidays? Where should they start?

Dana: I mean, I think when we talk about anxiety and stuff, plan for the worst-case scenario and then talk yourself through it. So what I've been talking to a lot of clients with and what I've been talking about on my podcast, and what we talked about last week when you came on my podcast - plug, if you want to listen to more Victoria - is make a plan.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Go in with some things that you can say whether it's just to hold a boundary of I don't really want to talk about diets and stuff when we're just trying to enjoy each other's company and stuff, or let's talk about something else. A gently diversionary topic.

Or coming up with responses based on your personality, whether you want to be sass machine like me sometimes, or just deciding it's okay to just be quiet in this situation, and acknowledging that you might freeze up. You might. And that's okay if that happens. That's also a nervous system response. Your body's just trying to protect you at the end of the day.

So I would say go into these situations anticipating that it might happen. There's definitely an over 50% chance that this is going to happen at any given holiday table this season, whether it's a cousin is making a comment, a parent, a grandparent, a honor uncle, whoever it is.

And I always like to remind people, when people are making comments about that stuff, it's never actually about you, even if the comment is directed toward you. It's always about that person's internal beliefs and their own insecurities.

Victoria: And what they value in the world, which is perhaps a patriarchal notion that women should be incredibly tiny in order to be worthwhile. And wait a second, if you're tiny, are you even worthwhile? Maybe that's the point.

I would also add to that from a thought work perspective, doing some thought work ahead of time, decide what you want to make those statements mean. So if someone says, "Looks like you put on the

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

quarantine 15,” do you want to make that an indictment of your worth? Do you want to make that a statement about your value? Or do you want to make it what it is, which is a report on gravity?

A report on the mass of a being. Or do you want to buy in to that moralistic story, like you said, from that perfectionist angle, you’re good or bad if you’ve gained or lost weight. And I’m not out here to buy in to that. I know you’re not either.

Dana: Absolutely not. I mean, so there’s a bunch of different ways that we can tackle this mindset-wise. So I think being prepared going in is really important and to preemptively remind yourself like Victoria’s saying, whether or not my body size has changed during the pandemic doesn’t make me a good or bad person.

And reminding yourself, and hopefully trying to not play into the conversation that will inevitably happen around good and bad foods, and good and bad “behaviors” around food. For example, “I’m going to be bad, I’m going back for seconds,” or, “We’re going to need to make up for this tomorrow.”

Or if you are a gym-going or active person, if you engage in some kind of group structured activity the morning of or the day before Thanksgiving, I guarantee you, unless you are in an exclusively body positive or weight neutral space, they’re going to say something like, “Make sure you do this many lunges or steps or whatever to make sure you earn your Thanksgiving whatever.”

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

And just remind yourself that, one, scientifically, that's not how that works. Calories in, calories out is a very outdated model. Antiquity here, we're talking. But then at the same time, reflecting that that doesn't reflect your value as a person and you never need to earn or burn any food.

This is just one day of the year or a few days of the year. And even if you are a person that is health conscious or health concerned or if you have a chronic health condition, this is my wheelhouse here. How do we do non-diet nutrition if we have chronic health conditions? Even if you are exposed to something, unless it's a true food allergy, please do your best to stay away from those things.

Victoria: An IGE reaction. I eat a nut, I begin to go into anaphylaxis and die.

Dana: Bring your EpiPens please.

Victoria: And your Benadryl.

Dana: Precautions here. All of the things. But if you have something like a food sensitivity, or if you know that it kind of triggers a flare in an autoimmune reaction or something like that, if you're exposed to a certain food, just remind yourself that even autoimmune disease is cyclical.

You're not always going to be in that flare just because you had one exposure. Bring your toolkit of things. So for example, I have celiac. If I'm going to a relative's house that I know is not an entirely gluten-free household, to take some precautions, I will bring some enzymes with me, I might bring activated charcoal, which is what I bring with me internationally just in case of some either potential cross-contamination, or a really bad



## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

exposure. That would be the charcoal situation. But just taking some precautions and knowing that it's going to be okay.

Victoria: It's so easy to get into that orthorexic space, right? Where we believe - do you want to define orthorexia for folks who are like, wait, what?

Dana: An unhealthy obsession with being healthy or health.

Victoria: Yes. And for us coming from the functional medicine space, it is rife with that.

Dana: It is orthorexic in there.

Victoria: It is, yes, very, very much. And I've dipped my toes into those waters and I'm glad I didn't dive into the pool, but I've had my moments of being like, the gluten, is that dairy organic, and then panicking, and then being like, yo, my body can handle this.

And using thought work and using all of our mindset tools to really pull ourselves back to what you are saying, which is these things are cyclical. Nobody loves to have a flare of three days of inflammation, and your body is built to manage these things.

Dana: Right. And speaking of thought work, we talk about this a lot. The connection between the mind work and the physiology and the symptoms that can manifest due to or resulting from the lack of mind work, or the impact on our biology and our physiology that our thoughts have.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

For example, I think this is a bad food, I'm now beating myself up for having this food. We're no longer in that rest and digest portion of the nervous system. We're now in fight, flight, or freeze, or fawn. Any of these avenues. And now your body isn't going to be breaking down that food. It's just kind of sitting there.

So if you're finding that you do get tripped up, or triggered with this good and bad food talk, or you're really stressed about when you're eating, how you're eating, the things you're eating, the things other people might be saying about what you're eating, all of these things contribute to you not being in rest and digest.

Meaning your body is not going to break down the food adequately, which means you're probably going to feel a little bit crappy, and it might have nothing to do with the actual chemical makeup of that food. It certainly doesn't have anything to do with that food being good or bad because no food is inherently good or bad.

There may be certain foods that have a higher nutrient value in them, for example, there's more vitamin C in an orange than there is in a bar of Hershey's chocolate or something. But that doesn't mean the orange is morally better than the Hershey's bar.

They're fueling your body in different ways. So just remember that if you are having symptoms, it might not be the food at all. If it's celiac or a food allergy, it's definitely the food. If it's not that, it could be a gut bacteria imbalance, it could be the nervous system acting up, it could be all of these different things.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

So I always encourage people, which is kind of ironic because I am a dietitian nutritionist, and people come to me and they're like, tell me how to lose weight and tell me what to eat. I'm like, well, no, and let's think beyond the food. And they're like, wow, this isn't what I was expecting.

Victoria: It's mind-blowing. We've been taught, we've been trained to believe that it's just what we eat and that stress doesn't play a role. And yet, how many of us stress eat and then have a belly ache and then stress about the belly ache and get into these really challenging cycles?

And I also do want to give a shout-out to when I was really sick, when my irritable bowel syndrome was a hot mess, when I had blastocystis hominis, which is such a not cute [inaudible], when I had small intestine bacteria overgrowth, I didn't have thought work yet and I didn't know how to manage my mindset around these things. And food was really stressful.

Dana: Oh yeah.

Victoria: Because I didn't know what was going on and I was making that a problem. And so what I was doing, I talk a lot about how when you're worrying, that's the feeling you're having, but it's also the action you're taking. When you're filling your brain space with future tripping, or rolling around in the past, ruminating, your entire everything is worry.

And when you're obsessing about the food, or when you're stressing about is this food, is this bite of corn going to make me bloated, you're not creating any space to reality check. You're not creating any space, like you said, to get into rest and digest so you can actually see what the what is.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Dana: And then the question becomes how much of the worrying about how I'm trying to figure out this health condition, how much I'm worrying about these foods, what foods I should and shouldn't be eating, how perfectionistic I'm trying to be about sticking to this food plan to reduce my symptoms, how much is the stress that that is causing actually contributing to my symptoms.

So it's kind of like a vicious cycle. So I totally sympathize with people who are there because it's like, okay, I understand what you're saying, but at the same time, there are certain foods that set me off. If you've got parasites, SIBO, all these other things, there are going to be foods because their chemical structure, the overgrowth of bacteria is like, oh yeah, party time, we're raging in here when you eat certain carbohydrates.

But then what I would provide is one of the solutions is, if you're working with a practitioner like me or Victoria, if we do have to mitigate or minimize certain foods while we're going through that protocol, we also need to do the thought work. We also need to do the mindset work around that food to make sure that yes, we can acknowledge this food is not doing great for my body right now, that doesn't mean that it's a bad food, and it doesn't mean that it's going to be this way forever.

Victoria: Totally. I love that last point because I think about what my body is capable of digesting now and it's just so wildly different than what it was for years and years. And I think that's a really important thing because we get into that all or nothing, which is tied to forever thinking. Like I can't digest FODMAPs, dairy.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

There was a while where eggs, chicken, all the sulfur-rich foods, absolute no gos. Someone offered me salad with chicken on it last night and something inside me went, and I was like, oh, wait a second.

Dana: You're like, are we good? Are we good?

Victoria: That's old news. That's old news. So pausing with that forever thinking. This is how it's going to be, I'm doomed, because I hear a lot of that too, I'm doomed. Reeling yourself back, this is right now, and in the future, when it has shifted, really giving yourself the grace, giving yourself love, care, compassion, gentleness, when your brain goes to that old neural groove of chicken equals doom or whatever your doom truck is.

And just pausing, breathing, loving up on that protector part, and then reminding yourself from your most loving parent like, baby, it's okay. When we eat that we feel okay now. Like it's okay, that's an old story.

Dana: The way that I like to draw this analogy for people is if we think about we're hiking through the woods and the neural pathway that we've gone down for a really long time is a path that thousands of people have gone down. Like chicken gives me this reaction, or whatever the food is. Or let's use sugar because everybody talks about sugar on the holidays.

If you go down that neural pathway or that thought process because you did for a long time, you were the one who wore down that neural pathway for whatever reason, if we're then trying to walk this new route, let's see, it's the first or second holiday season that you've been trying to do this thought work or just try a different way of thinking, of getting out of this all-or-nothing mentality, you got to hack down the weeds.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

You're going to have to move the trees out the way, you're going to have to walk that path a lot of times before it feels like it's the easy route. Right now, this is the route of most resistance. The other one is easier to go back to, so your immediate thought is going to be, "Oh yeah, it's that."

And it's like, hold on, there's now a sign in this path that's reminding me we don't have to go down this way if we don't want to. We can always go down that way and that's where the element of choice comes in. If, for example, you really don't feel well when you eat Thanksgiving amounts of sugar, let's say, because you've got whatever, gut conditions, or whatever it is, it's okay if you don't want to eat that amount of sugar on Thanksgiving.

The trick is let's try not to be so all or nothing and doom and gloom and forever about it. But this becomes even more complicated when your favorite aunt or whatever has made the pumpkin pie and they're like, "You don't want to eat my pumpkin pie? Is it not good? Do you not like it anymore?" And the guilt tripping comes and then the people pleasing side of you is like, oh gosh, no, we're going down this route, but what about my symptoms.

So in short, it's complicated and it's okay if you're feeling confused and conflicted and all of the things, because if you weren't, I would be like, wait a minute, what? What planet are you from and can I visit?

Victoria: Right. Are there any rentals available on your planet? Which brings us to boundaries, which I think is such a vital issue because I hear this all the time. I was feeling great, and then I went to this family event and there was this pressure to eat whatever, or even looping back to my mom

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

always makes comments about my weight, about my skin, about my hair, whatever boundary is that's likely to come up around the holiday table.

Folks listening to *Feminist Wellness* know how I think about boundaries. If you do x, I will do y. I would love to hear how you think about it and what support you give your clients.

Dana: So let's see, this was a couple of months ago over the summer I had a guest who is a therapist on the podcast and she was talking about the boundaries. And the way she explains it has always stuck with me. And she said boundaries are about my side of the street, ultimatums are about trying to control the other side of the street.

Victoria: Exactly.

Dana: So if we think about boundaries, because I know a lot of people have a lot of guilt around trying to set these boundaries, especially with family members and everything. But we have to remember, as much as they try to make it about them, it's really about you.

And not in the, oh, it's not you, it's me way of ending a relationship. It's no, I just really need to take care of me. And it's not, for example, with the apple pie, pumpkin pie, whatever it is, or people making comments about your weight. Again, reminding yourself, this is not about me, this is not about me, this is not about me.

But even that I don't think is enough in the moment. Again, heart brain, head brain. That's head brain being like, it's not about me, and the heart is like, but it still hurts, what are we going to do? So acknowledging that they

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

might guilt trip you hard, and that doesn't feel good, but I think going into that and saying okay, I understand that this pie means a lot to you, but I'm really full right now. Maybe I'll have some tomorrow. I don't want to not enjoy it now because I'm so full and then I just will feel really miserable.

So I'm going to - however far you want to go with this. I'm going to cut aside a slice for me and then I'm going to put it there and nobody better eat it tomorrow. And then you could even drag it out and be like, I'll be so mad if somebody eats my slice of pie and then I didn't get to try any of aunt whatever's pie or anything.

Now, if it's a comment about your hair, your dating status, when are you getting married, when are you having a baby, when are you getting a boyfriend, when are you getting a girlfriend, explain to me about your gender and sexuality, are you still...

Victoria: What are your pronouns?

Dana: Right. Oh my gosh, that's going to be - who are you dating now? And I don't mean like who like a person they're referring to. Like what gender are you dating now? Oh my gosh, come on. And those are going to be tough conversations.

So you have to decide what is the level of wall that I want to construct around myself. What is the way that I want to go? Do I want to go the gentle reminder kind of way of just rerouting the conversation of, how is so-and-so doing in their grad school program? Or whatever it is, redirecting.



## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Or pulling out the sass for example. If someone goes, “I don’t think you should be eating that,” you can turn around and be like, “What do you mean I shouldn’t be eating that? I’m not really sure what you’re saying.” And generally, if someone says something really rude, turning it around to them, be like, oh, what do you mean? I don’t really understand? Could you repeat that?

Because if they said something really rude and they’re not a really rude person, they’ll be like, repeating that back to myself, that didn’t feel very good. Or drawing a hard line in the sand and saying, for example, if someone’s like, oh, we’re going to have to work off this holiday food, I feel so fat, or whatever it is, do you want to join this weight loss program, be an accountability partner with me for whatever it is, you could say something like, “I’ve found that doing those kinds of programs has been really toxic for me and my relationship with food so I’m trying to explore a new way with this practitioner. I can send you some information if you’re interested.” Done.

Victoria: I love that. Simple, direct, honest.

Dana: Which is a nice way of saying please kindly fuck off.

Victoria: [Inaudible] is pretty much what you’re just saying right there. Or as my dad likes to say, good for you.

Dana: My grandma goes, “You’ve got broad shoulders, you can take it.” My whole family is from New Jersey.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Victoria: I see where you get that Jersey sass from. May be America's armpit but you're hilarious.

Dana: It really is and it smells like that too. Not all of it. Mostly just Newark.

Victoria: The southern farms are really pretty. Wait, back to boundaries though, I've really got into this place in my life, and we baby step our way here. So we may start with what you're offering, which I think is so beautiful of explaining.

We talk a lot, because my focus is supporting folks to shift codependent thinking, making sure you're not justifying. But maybe explaining feels really nice to start. And I've personally gotten to this place where I just go to no thank you and just smile.

Do you want pie? No, thank you. Have a piece of pie. No, thank you. But just one piece. No, thank you. And just repeat it and smile. Repeat it and smile. Just that's what I got for you. I'm not interested.

Dana: I'm not available for this conversation right now.

Victoria: My favorite line ever. I'm not available for it. And you know, for me, somatically, it is only because I've been doing so much work to regulate myself that I've been able to get to the point where saying I'm not available for a conversation around weight, I'm not available to explain my date's they/them pronouns, I'm not available to tell you why I don't celebrate Thanksgiving.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Also I should acknowledge I grew up on Wampanoag land, as we're talking about turkey day. I'm not available for these conversations. Basta. You know what I mean? Beginning, middle, end.

Dana: And it's complicated.

Victoria: And it took me many, many, many years to get to here. And I'm really glad to be here, but I just want to also make sure that I'm not painting it like it's simple at first. Because your nervous system is likely to kick up a bunch of pushback because of our socialization, because of our conditioning, and because particularly for humans socialized as women, that I'm not available, that plain, simple no thank you is so antithetical to all that good girl conditioning we've been taught time after time. Oh, just be polite, honey, just eat what you're given, just go along to get along, don't make her angry.

Dana: But don't eat too much.

Victoria: But don't eat too much because you got to be skinny because or else you'll get a good husband.

Dana: Unless you have parents that are like, why are you so skinny? You got to eat more, have you not eaten since last Thanksgiving?

Victoria: There's also that. As an Argentine, which last I checked was the country with the highest rate of eating disorders on the planet. I haven't checked in a minute so maybe I shouldn't state that fact like it's a fact.

Dana: Well, last you checked, that is a valid fact.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Victoria: Right, fair. I checked a long time ago. Someone's going to fact check me on that and they're welcome to. Who knows? But we love that forced skinniness so hard. They talk about mate, the drink of my people, as the drink of the rich and the drink of the poor because it serves the same purpose, which is appetite suppression. Wow, Argentina, how you doing? Not great is the answer. But back to boundaries.

Dana: Is anybody doing great right now? Speaking of boundaries.

Victoria: For sure. Also PS, I love how meandering our conversations are. It's always the best.

Dana: This is just kind of how it is.

Victoria: Especially right now. So we talked about boundaries. Oh, buffering. I wanted to talk about buffering and food as buffering. So for those who don't know the term buffering, I define it as anything we do to keep ourselves from feeling a feeling.

And it's that unconscious process of your mom texts and you don't want to answer her, you have a fight with someone, your boss emails you late, and so you turn on Netflix, you eat the thing, you go for a run. Let's not pretend it's not the "healthy" activities too. You could even meditate as a buffer.

So it's anything you're doing without consciousness and I differentiate that from conscious distraction, which is when we recognize, oh wow, my nervous system is getting kicked out of ventral vagal, I'm heading up the polyvagal ladder into sympathetic fight or flight, I'm getting shunted down the polyvagal ladder into dorsal freeze.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

And if you're listening for the first time and you're like, what is these words, head on over to [victoriaalbina.com/podcast](http://victoriaalbina.com/podcast). There's a search box. Put in polyvagal. You'll get a bunch of episodes and actually our conversation on show last week, we talked a lot about polyvagal. So that's a good resource.

So conscious distraction is when we recognize like, yo, I am getting dysregulated, I'm going to pause thinking about this and I'm going to go do a puzzle, I'm going to doodle, I'm going to go for a walk. But consciously taking a break, versus trying to avoid our feelings. Okay, so that was me giving my nerds a definition. But yeah, so when I say that, buffering and food, what comes up for you? Because your face lit up.

Dana: So another way to think about this too is I explain it to people as distraction versus processing. When we think about stress as unprocessed emotion in the body. So if we are like, I can't deal with this, I'm just going to go, whatever it is, eat, go for a run, go lift some weights, all the things, we're not actually working through the things that caused us to have those feelings.

There are other times when it's like, okay, I'm going to therapy, I'm going to meditate, I'm going to do all these things and let it process out through my body. That being said, like in the time of Thanksgiving when everything is like, all the way up to here, sometimes buffering or distraction is the tool that we use because we don't have the capacity to process right now, or we don't have the time and space to process right now.

But I mean, buffering itself, when we think about Thanksgiving, this is going to be happening a lot. Because whether it's there are conversations that we don't want to be a part of, or we're just eating to please other people, or it's

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

wow, I never get to eat this food but I also kind of feel like it's a bad food so I'm just going to eat it as fast as I can, and then your stomach's like, why did we do that?

And now it reinforces the wow, this really is a bad food for me. I think it's just there are so many feelings around the holidays wherever they're coming from that for most people, allowing themselves to feel that much would be too much. So food becomes one of the tools that we use to buffer.

For a lot of people, exercise becomes one of the tools that we use to buffer. So we don't feel as bad about using food as a tool to buffer because we are caught in the earning and burning food mentality.

Victoria: Yeah, I love that framework about processing. Processing or not. So how would you coach someone if they're in that moment where they're reaching for food or beverages, or writ large whatever, but keeping this holiday in food specifics. In that moment when you're reaching for the whatever, what would you invite people to say or do, or how do support themselves to pause the buffering cycle?

Dana: So when I'm working with people, especially if it's a fear food, I would say, or a food that you have shoulds around, or a food that should be a "moderation" food, I always encourage people to slow down and try to really experience all of the sensations that come with eating, especially because when we are around a holiday table, there really are foods that are kind of all-or-nothing.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Because for example, most people don't eat pumpkin and apple pie outside of November and December in the US during the year. So it does have a little bit of that restrict-binge mindset because it doesn't really exist the rest of the year. You could always make a pumpkin pie in the middle of July if you wanted to, but rare that it's going to happen.

So one of the ways that I encourage people to process through this is if you are choosing to eat a food, I presume it's because you actually like it. So I would love for you to actually enjoy that food. So let's try and best you can slow down, not for the purpose of appetite control or something like that, but because if you're going to choose to eat a food, I would love for you to enjoy that food.

And this is also really helpful for rest and digest because then your body's hunger signals can actually catch up with you, which prevents you from feeling all of the, oh my gosh, I feel like I'm eight months pregnant after eating Thanksgiving dinner because I ate so fast.

A lot of the reason people eat so fast is because they feel bad about the things that they're eating, and they feel like I shouldn't be eating these. These are the types of macronutrients or nutrients or foods that I usually like to eat on my own when no one is watching me because I don't want to be judged.

And especially if you're a person that inhabits a larger body, you know that there are people around you who are judging you for no matter what you eat. So it's more likely that you're probably going to eat faster because you don't want to experience that judgment for any longer than it is.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

So regardless of what body size you inhabit, I would always recommend slowing down because it is - especially if you're in a larger body, it is a radical act for you to be able to actually enjoy your food in front of other people. And if they go, "Do you really think you should be eating that?" You go, "I'm not really sure what you're saying. Do you think I shouldn't be eating this?"

Drawing that boundary and slowing down at the same time, which if you love pumpkin pie, slow down and enjoy the pumpkin pie, which is a very slow and radical step towards giving yourself permission to eat all foods.

Another thing that people get really tripped up with in this buffering is if you do tend to be an all-or-nothing person, it's I need to eat all of the pumpkin pie and get it out of the house so I don't have to think about this anymore. If you can slow down and allow yourself the satisfaction from that food and you can really get to the place of I can have this tomorrow, I can have this the next day if I want to - again, this is a really hard process to go through.

Would never recommend you do this by yourself. Please work with a practitioner. These are the steps to go through if you want to start testing this out today, on turkey day, or whenever it is. If we can finally get to that place of I can eat this food and it's okay for me to eat this food, we're also less likely to have the feelings of guilt and shame and yes and no foods, and good and bad foods, and we're less likely to have the digestive symptoms that go along with this too. So that's a double bonus.

Victoria: I love where you're pointing us, to always put it in the framework of the think-feel-act cycle. That thought, this is forbidden, there's something wrong with me if I eat x, y, z food, someone's going to judge me. And



## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

recognizing that those all circle back to our self-worth and the stories we're telling about our value being linked to other people's thoughts, other people's feelings, other people's judgments, and our actions, our choice to eat or not is just such a rich place to do so much work.

And I love that you brought us back to pleasure, which is such - I think such a vital feminist issue, particularly around food and the bodies of humans socialized as women because our pleasure is a very complicated thing. Particularly in this Judaical, Christian framework of Madonna whore. You're damned if you do and damned if you don't. And how dare you? Particularly if you're in a larger body.

Dana: It's like sex and good, my God, come on.

Victoria: Sex, food, money. Three things that women have all sorts of complicated feelings about. Or do thought work and then don't. Find your way to the other side of that where you are really operating from, what I think is for me the goal of healing, which is to live in greater pleasure, in greater joy, and greater happiness.

And thereby to give yourself the permission to experience joy, to experience pleasure. And if there's a food that eating it will bring you pleasure, if that's the thought in your mind, go for it. But do it slowly.

Dana: Do it slowly so we can bring ourselves back into the moment. I find that most of the actual tool of buffering happens when we are eating fast because if we are distracted eating, not mindfully eating, whatever it is, that's the only time that we can be buffering because you can't be trying to think through all these things and focusing on your food at the same time.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

So one easy not super committal way I would say to work on buffering is just, okay, I'm just going to focus on my food. I'm just going to focus on this bite. Maybe put your fork down if you want to. If you don't want to, if it's really delicious, you can keep holding your fork. Yield that thing as a weapon if you need to. Stay away, this is my plate. I want to eat this.

But trying to taste the different - and this is more in mindful eating. Taste the different flavors, textures, spices, everything like that. What do I like about this food? Interestingly enough, some of my clients will try this and they're like, I thought I really liked ice cream, or I thought I really liked this, and now that I've given myself permission to eat it, I realize the only reason I wanted to eat it was because it was forbidden.

And now I'm like, ice cream, I would rather have the apple pie or something. Or maybe you find you only really like ice cream if it's with apple pie. Now you're not so much a, I'm going to take the whole pie and Ben & Jerry's to the couch and finish it. Now I'm like, it doesn't really do much for me, I'd rather have some cookies, or I'd rather have some popcorn, or I'd rather have whatever.

Victoria: Steak, says the Argentine. Always more steak.

Dana: Always more steak, with chimichurri please.

Victoria: You're welcome. The sauce of my people. You're welcome. But what you're pointing us towards is orienting our nervous system, right? Which is one of the most beautiful ways I find to bring myself back into ventral vagal, and particularly for folks who have experienced stress, distress, and trauma, it is an easier, safer feeling way to orient the nervous

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

system and to regulate the nervous system rather than going into our bodies.

Particularly if that doesn't feel like a safe thing to be in our own bodies alone, if it feels like going into a dark neighborhood alone at night, dark alley rather. We can orient, which you just explained so beautifully. Getting present to all of our senses. Anything else you'd like to add to the conversation?

Dana: I would say give yourself some compassion. This time of year is hard for many reasons always, but especially this year when we haven't been with people for a long time, when there may be people that aren't present this time that have been there before because of the pandemic, or just time passing, or the many different breakups and makeups and get togethers and all of the things that have happened as a result of or during the pandemic.

So again, I think going back to the acknowledging that it's okay that this is hard because if it's not hard, you're probably buffering. And maybe you're not...

Victoria: Or doing copious thought work. But yeah.

Dana: Or doing copious thought work. That too. But maybe that's just the 0.1% of all of the people. But yeah, acknowledging that yes, this is a hard time, and if you do feel like you're struggling, that's pretty normal. Is it optimal? No. But is it normal? Yeah. So just get yourself some tools and try them out and see what works for you.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Victoria: Yeah. And know that however you show up this year for this holiday season, again, don't forever it. You don't need to choose to make it, well, setting the boundaries, it didn't work the way I wanted it to this year, or I ended up buffering with whatever substance or activity that I didn't want to, and so I guess I'm doomed.

You never need to choose to go to there. And you also never need to borrow anyone else's thoughts. That's one of my favorite facts of thought work is that you get to choose your thoughts. And so whatever someone else thinks about your body, your food choices, your anything, that just gets to be their thoughts in their thought work protocol and you don't ever need to take it on.

Dana: And if we want to get really meta, it's not even their thoughts. It's thoughts that they've absorbed from something else.

Victoria: Such a great point. You don't need to take on other people's socialization and conditioning as formulated into thoughts by their particular prefrontal cortex. God, I love what a nerd you are.

Dana: Speaking of, I didn't do this yet, I figured for our nerdy Friday conversation, Harry Potter. Got a Harry Potter tattoo, can talk Harry Potter any day. Not J.K. Rowling, but Harry Potter.

Victoria: Right, of course. No, we are not turfs. Neither one of us is out here for turf talk.

Dana: What if she had a podcast? Would it be called Turf Talk Tuesdays?

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Victoria: I think so. I think Magical Turf Talk Tuesdays.

Dana: Oh man.

Victoria: We've gone far astray but I love it.

Dana: She went very far astray. We also did.

Victoria: Did she go far astray though or did she just stay the second way of course?

Dana: I think she just decided to get loud about it.

Victoria: Big sigh on that. Just a big sigh on all of that.

Dana: We'll end on a higher note. You can do it.

Victoria: But you really can. I love to end with a pep talk because I am a Leo with four different Leo placements and I'm just a positive animal, except for when I'm in the pits of despair. But let's be real.

Dana: I'm an Aries/Taurus cusp, so at times I can help people be very grounded with a healing presence, and other times I'm like, where's the baseball bat? I got you.

Victoria: You're amazing. You know what I used to jokingly say when I'm at my medical practice? I'd crack my knuckles and be like, I got an orthopedic department if anyone's messing with you. But I meant it. Because that Leo loyalty. I'm like, don't mess with my people. I'm serious about it. But not

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

pro-violence. Only as jokes. Dana, someone has to reel us in. Who's the adult around here?

Dana: It's not me.

Victoria: Girl, it's not me either. What are we going to do?

Dana: Sometimes I wonder how I got this far.

Victoria: Sometimes I'm like, oh, up until very recently, I could prescribe opiates. I just let me DA license lapse and I was like, wow, I'm a full-fledged adult, I own a home, I have multiple pairs of pants. Who even am I? And then I remember, I'm my own most loving parent and it feels really great. And I'm also glad I can't prescribe opiates anymore because I don't want any part in that jam, let's be real. You're fantastic.

Dana: Thank you for having me on.

Victoria: Wait, did we do a positivity pep talk? We talked about doing it and then we got distracted and then we wondered who the adults were, but should we be the adults?

Dana: Yeah, let's be adults.

Victoria: Do you want to say one positive thing and then I'll say one positive thing and we'll go back and forth? I think that would be cute. Do you think it's cute? I think it's cute. Okay, great. Ready, go.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Dana: You are the best. You are in control of your thoughts, even if it doesn't feel like you are. You can always come back to you.

Victoria: I love that. There's so much allowance in there that like you said, neural grooves are going to neural groove and it is getting the machete out and creating the new neural pathway through the forest. That takes a hot minute. And even if it doesn't feel like you're in control, you really are. You can really change your thoughts to change the way you feel. I loved that. Let's end there because that was so beautiful.

Dana: That's just the virtual hug.

Victoria: We're so cheesy. I love us. We're like one of those tapioca-based non-dairy cheese.

Dana: People should see what it looks like when we text each other.

Victoria: It's so ridiculous.

Dana: Paint me like one of your French ponies. No one's going to get that except us. That's fine.

Victoria: We can just leave that there, but that's pretty amazing. Alright, where can the good people find you? Because you know they want to hang out with you after this.

Dana: So you can find me, let's see, my website is [realfoodwithdana.com](http://realfoodwithdana.com). Instagram is @danamonsees\_cns but just search Dana Monsees, I'll come up.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Victoria: How many E's are in Monsees?

Dana: Two. EEs. If you search my name, all the things will come up. But I also have a podcast that Victoria's on last week. It's called Whole-Hearted Eating. I know, I really need to streamline all these names but here we are.

Victoria: Here we are not being perfectionists and just moving forward with our businesses and our lives and not really getting all stuck in the little bits and the things that don't really matter at the end of the day. And I could get all hospice nurse-y on that, but...

Dana: Plus, it's really hard to change your website domain. I don't know if you know that, but if you have an existing website from a long time, changing every single URL on there, not happening for this girl.

Victoria: Right. That sounds like a really self-loving choice. What do you want to prioritize in your life? Being of service? How many clients could you help to see their own mind so they can change their lives and their relationship with food, or could you spend those hours changing a URL?

Dana: Yeah, no thanks.

Victoria: What matters to you?

Dana: That's a pretty easy choice.

Victoria: Pretty easy choice for me too. But you know, here we are. I cut you off again. Anywhere else you want to send the people?



## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

Dana: No, you didn't cut me off.

Victoria: I didn't? I'll try harder next time.

Dana: I think that's all the places you can find me. On the episode with Victoria last week, we also linked, if you like these examples of what do I say in this conversation, we have a freebie that's a tough conversations guide for how to give some very gentle or sassy responses to a bunch of different holiday conversations and we kind of crowdsourced that from Instagram and from the podcast. So it's all free. If you want to get it, it's linked in Victoria's episode on my podcast. So that's Whole-Hearted Eating.

Victoria: Perfect. We'll put that in the show notes. I bet link in bio on your Instagram too?

Dana: Yeah.

Victoria: Fantastic. That is such a delight. Well, thank you so much for coming on the show. It was ridiculous because that's how we do.

Dana: We always are. It's like, very fine line between professional and all of the nerdiness and then also just like, we're little nutty sometimes. What do you want to do?

Victoria: Right. And maybe we throw professionalism under the bus and just be our wild and nerdy selves. Yay. Well, thank you, thank you.

Dana: Thank you again.

## **Ep #145: Navigating Food, Boundaries, and Your Nervous System During the Holidays with Dana Monsees**

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I hope you enjoyed that informative and frankly very, very silly conversation that Dana and I had. I love having brilliant, amazing, nerd-tastic colleagues who I can be my authentic self with, and my authentic self is quite ridiculous a lot of the time, and that's something I really, really like about me.

So my darling, if you are enjoying the show and everything you are learning here about shifting your mindset, about how you can use thought work to change those old stories in your mind, body, and spirit, you're going to want to check out Anchored, my six-month program, to help you overcome codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing habits so you can drop the anxiety, drop the stress, and reconnect with self-love and profound embodied self-worth.

Head on over to [victoriaalbina.com/anchored](http://victoriaalbina.com/anchored) to learn all about it. Now, let's do what we do. Gentle hand on your heart if that feels good to you. And remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. 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](http://victoriaalbina.com/masterclass) to grab your seat now. See you there. It's going to be a good one.