

## Ep #155: Why Privacy Matters



### 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. Last week, we talked all about the difference between privacy and secrecy, and how the roots of secrecy are so often shame, fear, and worry about what others will think, say, or do when they learn our truth.

And I made note and want to make note again of how logical and understandable it was for us to decide as children that being secretive was safer because it often was as children. It was the smart thing to be and do.

So, we get to both honor that and find a new way forward as adults. A way of living that includes more radical honesty, less shame, and intentional decision-making about what to keep boundaried a sacred privacy.

Before I proceed, if you haven't listened to last week's episode, I highly recommend that you do before diving into this one. I'd like to start us off with a quote from Rilke.

"The point of partnership is not to create a quick commonality by tearing down all boundaries. On the contrary, a good partnership is one in which each partner appoints the other to be the guardian of his solitude, and thus they show each other the greatest possible trust."

So beautiful. I love to think of my partners and the people in my intimate circle as the guardians of my solitude. As folks who want the best for me as I want for them, and who recognize that privacy is a vital part of health and wholeness.

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That privacy builds intimacy, self-knowledge, self-awareness, self-actualization. And in relationships, privacy builds trust. Privacy is a sacred and beautiful thing. And I call it sacred privacy because it's about your autonomy, which is something I hold sacred because I worked for many years to know, honor, and embrace my own autonomy, coming from my deep codependent thought habits.

So my autonomy, my sense of self, my knowing who I am and knowing that I make the best decisions for me, I hold that to be sacred. And privacy is a key part of that autonomy because it's about knowing your truth and deciding what you do and don't want to share in a way that honors your wants and needs.

As opposed to secrecy, which like codependent thinking, is externally focused. Privacy meanwhile is internally focused. It's you deciding for yourself what you want to share and is not anyone's business but your own. And that is boundaried privacy.

Privacy is important because we need that space to recharge, to get to know ourselves, and have that solitude. Private time for introspection and self-reflection is vital and gives us the chance, the time, the space to know who we are in relation to no one but ourselves.

And that's the huge shift for us from our codependent thinking because in codependency, we are used to thinking of ourselves in relation to everyone around us and only in relation to everyone around us. Private time allows us to ask ourselves, who am I when the only one observing me is me?

It gives us a chance to see ourselves when we are not performing our identity for anyone else. So much of codependency is about performing our identity with the hope of getting approval from others, and that identity is

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often what was prescribed for us by our family blueprint, our socialization, our conditioning, the patriarchy.

Privacy and private time give us a break from all of that external pressure to get to know ourselves and to attend to ourselves for ourselves on our own, which can also be a challenging thing to embrace when we feel like we don't know ourselves after a lifetime of codependent thinking and when we're used to relating to ourselves, thinking about ourselves through the lens of our childhood roles.

The fixer, martyr, savior, saint, helper, jester, joker. When you're alone with you, you get to see how you relate to yourself and the world when your only focus is you. To protect our privacy, we get to set boundaries in our relationships.

Before we can do that, we have to believe the thought that having privacy in our relationships is a good and healthy thing and doesn't mean you don't love your partners, children, parents, friends. It's not that you aren't connected.

It just means that your private time is yours. Your journal is yours. Your conversation with your friends or therapist are yours unless you want to share them. Privacy is a choice, and it's a choice you get to actively make and keep making.

It builds agency, whereas secret-keeping because it's driven by shame and fear takes away our agency. And setting your boundaries, particularly when we live with others is so important, especially within the context of our codependent habit of giving our time, our energy, our privacy away in service of other people liking and approving of us.

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Privacy is particularly important for us because without a private life, we have the tendency to merge with the people we love, to get all enmeshed and to take on their everything as our own and to forget who we are in the process.

I mean, how many times have you thought, “I totally lost myself in that relationship?” I know I have. I’ve talked about it here before in episode 139, Top 5 Codependent Dating Challenges. This is a thing we do. We chameleon and shape-shift and people please and show up as someone we think other people want us to be instead of who we are and who we love ourselves to be.

We lose that thread of connection with ourselves. And having a private life is how you maintain that connection with self. How you find yourself again and how you re-establish healthy boundaries that serve you and thus, all of your relations.

This is vital for us because at the core of our codependent habits is a lack of individuation, of remembering who we are under our role identity from childhood because codependency comes from the core wound of not enoughness, of not believing we are worthy unless everyone around us agrees that we are, and is often formed in enmeshed family systems with codependent caretakers.

As children, our identity was often deeply enmeshed with those of our closest people. Our parents, family, our religious community, our friends growing up and later in life, if we don’t pause to individuate, to learn who we are and what we individually want and need, we enmesh with our lovers and partners and continue the cycle over and over again.

Individuating while in a partnership can bring up a lot of feelings for all involved. Often, one partner protests this move towards individuating and

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setting boundaries around privacy and may present as angry, needy, or annoyed at the changes.

But at the core of it often is a deep fear of abandonment. So why bother? Why bother individuating if it's going to lead to a whole kerfuffle in your relationships? Well, because on the other side of stepping into your autonomy, of remembering who you are when you're not just in codependent service of your relationships, there is a lot of happiness and joy to be found.

It's really beautiful to get to know ourselves. It builds trust in ourselves. And from there, your relationships can grow to be healthier ones, more interdependent, and based in mutuality. Not in being consumed by and with one another.

The other benefit of developing a robust private life in a romantic or intimate relationship is a more fulfilling sex life. It makes sense if you think about it. When we can see our partners as their own people, not someone we're merged with, there's more room for attraction to grow because we can see them as a full autonomous person, as someone who's not us.

Someone we don't have to take care of in a caretake-y, codependent way. And I know it can sound weird that you need to remember, relearn how to see your partner as not you, that you're two individual people. But I hear this all the time from clients.

"I've been in this relationship for so long we feel more like housemates or siblings at this point in our marriage. I know way too much about them to feel turned on by them." And a client the other day goes - this was so funny. She's like, "I mean, it's not even sexy to see him take his clothes off because he's always walking around naked. There's no allure in that."

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Now, I'm not throwing shade at walking around naked. I mean, that's silly. But my point is what you see every day loses its novelty. So maybe you bring a little vavavavoom back into the bedroom by putting a robe on it. Figuratively, but also very much literally, you know what I mean?

Privacy makes us sexy. Let's go through some examples because those are always so helpful. And I'm going to use the context of an intimate partnership here, and you should of course apply this to whatever relationships matter to you. And let's just pretend there isn't a global pandemic still raging for ease of saying things like, hanging out with friends in a bar or whatever.

And these are just some thoughts of mine, individual results may vary. By which I mean these are some things that would work in my life and have worked in my life. They might not work in yours and that's cool.

So some examples of healthy privacy in a relationship might be that each member of the relationship has their own friends outside of the relationship who they have regular phone or video dates with, text regularly, hang out with on their own, and sometimes they all hang out together, but not always.

They get private time with their friends, their people, and can come together when that also feels fun. Each member of the relationship has individual hobbies and passions too, which are just theirs.

Perhaps one partner is in a book club on their own. Perhaps one person in a relationship spends every Wednesday night in a ceramics studio while her girlfriend watches their kids. Perhaps a gentleman in a relationship takes swimming lessons at the local Y every morning on the early side, while his partner walks the dog and talks with their BFF. Why did I say gentleman? I never say gentleman. Whatever. Brains are funny.

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Perhaps one partner goes away on camping trips while the other goes on a writer's retreat and they don't talk on the phone every day or night because they're really dedicated to being fully present where they are in their own private activities.

Perhaps one of them goes to spend the evening at their favorite bar with their friends on Tuesday night and the other partner likes to go have dinner with their friends on Thursday night. In this healthy relationship with balanced privacy, their time apart is balanced by time together, doing things they mutually enjoy and not just couching it every weekend out of unintentional habit.

Taking this time to explore what you're individually interested in is so grounding, rewarding, and important, and trusting that your partners are taking time for themselves is a beautiful gift to give to all members of your relationship.

So what should you make sure to share with your partners? Well, I start with those things that would negatively affect your partner if you didn't share it. Like things that might impact their health or finances, your shared children, pet, home, plants, their relationship with you, and most importantly, those things that would impact their ability to make an informed decision for their life and your relationship.

So some examples. If you're spending your own money on your hobby, that can be private. If you spend half your joint savings on the latest Beanie Babies trend, then that's definitely something you're going to want to share. If you have the hots for your calligraphy teacher, totally your business. If you're making out with her on a pile of parchment after class, that is something to share.



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If your partner believes you're mutually monogamous and you look on Tinder, Grindr, Lex, or whatever here and there, well, that's approaching a grey area around sharing. It depends on the boundaries of your individual relationship. But for sure, the second you swipe right and start a convo, stop convo time.

If you had sex with half of the Park Slope Food Coop the year before you met your current date, that is 100% just your private business. If you haven't had STI testing since then and you're sleeping with this new person, then that's going to be your date's business for sure, a.k.a you got some explaining to do.

If your kid told you they're dreaming of running away to join the circus, then that's something you can keep private between the two of you. But if your six-year-old's bags are packed and they're ready to go, the taxi's waiting, he's blowing his horn, you're going to want to go get their other parent posthaste.

If you told your partner that you're hanging out with a friend, going on a masked outdoor walk, and then you decided to go inside their house and take your mask off, then that crosses that line between something private, I'm hanging out with a friend tonight, and something that you need to share because there's that health risk there.

So your partner gets to know what's up, that you may have had a Covid exposure, so they can make an informed decision for their own health and their own wellness.

My focus around privacy in relationships is one of radical honesty. Choosing truthfulness over secrecy in a bounded way that feels healthy for me. If a date or a partner, someone important in my life were to ask me about something private, I would either answer honestly and tell them

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about that thing if I felt so moved, or I'd let them know that it's private and it's just for me to hold sacred.

Or if it's something I'm in process around, that I'm really working out or integrating, I'll let them know that I'm willing to share about it and I will when I'm ready to, on my time, in my bounded way.

And if someone asks me about something and I feel that rush of shame come up in my body, or if it feels scary to share it, that is when at this point in my life, and this is based in trusting myself, that I know how to regulate my nervous system, I know how to show up for my limbic system and my inner children, I'm anchored in me.

Then I will gently, lovingly, but firmly encourage myself to lean into vulnerability and to share it. As a way to continue to shed that shame, to show myself that I can share things with people I trust and love and won't die, which is what my inner children believe for sure.

And as a way to broaden and expand my somatic and nervous system capacity to stay grounded and regulated in myself. That said, I also choose to keep some things private. Just for me of course. Like bathroom moments.

I mean, those are 100,000% private moments. Even if I'm just up in there rewatching Schitt's Creek for the 4000th time while doing a face mask, a hair mask, and an Epsom salt bath at the same time, that's my private experience. It's not for sharing, thank you very much.

My journal, private. My conversations with my ride-or-die besties, private. My work with my spiritual teachers, private, until I've processed it for myself. And then generally speaking, I love to share it, again, on my time when I am ready.

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And I know that I don't have to share all of it. Just the part that deepens the intimacy, love, and trust I have with that other person. The parts that help that person to get to know me, who I am and what's going on in my life and my growth.

And I am careful to run a check. I don't share private things to try to get someone to love me or like me, to try to manipulate them into sharing with me, to create false bonds or to force connection where there otherwise isn't one.

And I keep the secrets of those I love when I'm asked to. As long, of course, as there's no risk of harm to anyone in keeping that secret. So what do you do if you feel threatened by your partner having a private life or vice versa?

When your partner or person is jealous of your friend time, monitors your calendar or phone, or otherwise isn't down with you having a private life. So let's bring in our old pal attachment style theory here to understand this a bit.

And if you're like, wait, what is that? No stress, I talked all about it in detail in episode 129, Attachment Styles 101, and episode 135, Attachment and Nervous System Resourcing. So your primer and a deeper dive are right there for you.

So if we or our loved one functions from anxious attachment, we may think that setting boundaries around privacy is a problem. It's a sign of a lack of trust because from anxious attachment, we think it's share everything or you don't love me.

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Insecure attachment styles and all-or-nothing, black-and-white thinking are going steady for sure. So an anxiously attached person might confuse privacy and secrecy.

And whichever side of the anxious attachment you are on, having a loving conversation about the difference between privacy and secrecy, setting a firm boundary, and sharing a reminder that privacy is about building trust and care, that it's sacred and to be honored in a loving relationship may all be helpful, along with assuring the person that you're not trying to abandon them. You're taking care of yourself, which fills your cup, so you can give to them from your emotional overflow.

And if we or our beloveds are avoidantly attached, we/they may lean towards playing the old cards too close to the vest and may think that sharing things is a problem because intimacy and vulnerability scare us.

And so the anxiously attached person may keep things private that would lead to more love if shared in a safe relationship container. When we are in a relationship with someone who has insecure attachment, they may see privacy as a threat.

That doesn't mean you don't honor your privacy. Just be aware of the response you may get and remind yourself that that response can shift over time in a relationship as more trust is built.

So some helpful questions to ask yourself are what do you make it mean if your partner's requesting privacy? Are you making it mean they don't love you? Do you catastrophize if your partner says, "This sacred thing, this time, this other relationship with this friend or with a ceramic studio, this is just mine?"

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And you can ask your partners these questions too so you can meet each other with love, care, and can give one another the reassurance and support that builds the foundation for reciprocity and growth, regardless of what's beneath the surface.

You get to honor your own and your partner's sacred right to privacy, your children's too, your parents' as well. And you get to set mutually loving boundaries about what you want to share and what you don't.

And if your partner insists on going through your phone or reading your journal, then you get to ask yourself if this is a relationship you still want to be in. If it's truly serving you, if there is a foundation of trust, of reciprocity, of mutuality, of interdependence or not.

I'd like to close with the Rilke quote we started with because it's so powerful and bears repeating. "The point of partnership is not to create a quick commonality by tearing down all boundaries. On the contrary, a good partnership is one in which each partner appoints the other to be the guardian of his solitude, and thus they show each other the greatest possible trust."

So beautiful. Thank you for listening, my darling. I hope this episode and the one before where we really clarify the difference between secrecy and privacy has been supportive for you. When in doubt, I choose radical honesty, showing up to support myself, to stand in my truth.

If you've been enjoying this episode and the 154 that came before it, I have a wee favor to ask you. If you could head on over to Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your shows, hit that follow or subscribe button and leave a rating. A star is rating, five would be a delight if you feel so moved, and a written rating, a review of the show is so incredibly helpful.

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The way these systems work, the way the algorithm works, the more ratings and reviews and followers, subscribers a show has, the more likely it is to show up in search.

I do this show each and every week to be of service, to share this information I've been so privileged to know and to learn and to have the space to metabolize. I love to share it with you all, to make this work accessible.

So if you could take a moment to help in that mission, I'd be so darn grateful. Thank you my darling. Let's do what we do. Gentle hand on your heart should that feel loving for you. And remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my 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](https://victoriaalbina.com/masterclass) to grab your seat now. See you there. It's going to be a good one.