

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Victoria Albina, NP, MPH**

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## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

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. So, this week, I want to talk about something I see pretty much every day in my clients in Anchored, my six-month program. And definitely have seen in myself, which is this; almost obsessively picking apart and deconstructing our thoughts, and spinning and spooning and endless thought work.

Which can so easily turn into self-criticism and self-judgment, and feeling like, oh, geez, I'm never going to be able to change these thoughts. What's wrong with me? I'm lousy at thought work. Or, it can lead us to say thought work doesn't work, which is not true to my lived experience, when actually, the answer may be simpler than your brain would lead you to think.

This week, I want to remind you, that while your thoughts as they interplay with your nervous system, are always playing a really important role in your felt experience of life. Sometimes the issue that really needs your attention is a more mammalian one. That it's not just your thoughts that create your lived experience, there are myriad factors at play that impact your thoughts. And there are myriad factors that impact your body, that then impact your thoughts.

And that is our topic, today. You see, it's really easy for us to forget that we are in fact, taller toddlers. You heard me right; I called you and me a taller toddler. And I might keep cracking up every time I say that, because it's kind of funny, right? And that's what we are, in a biological sense.

So, our brain tells us that just because we're taller, we're grown; we pay taxes and drive cars and put on our own pants, thank you very much. We

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

don't need to be paying the same exquisite attention to our biological needs, as when we were knee-high to a proverbial grasshopper. And, it's just not true. And I don't think it's loving to expect our human bodies, and minds, and nervous systems, to do life without the basic attention every toddler, knee-high or fully grown, needs.

My beauty, we're all out here learning to be more emotionally mature. To show up as our most favorite version of ourselves, a term someone shared with me recently, that I like so much more than our like, best self, because it's a lot less pressure, you know.

And while we're doing that work, it's really challenging to fully show up when our bodies aren't attended to. If you know my work, then you know that I believe that our connection with our body's deep intelligence, is a vital part of healing our past, getting present right now, and creating the future we dream of.

As a holistic and functional medicine nurse practitioner, as the body focused somatics-based coach that I am, my life-long focus has been, and will likely always be, the importance of our bodies and our lived experience. And I don't know about you, but it's challenging for me to step into full presence with myself, when I'm not taking care of my body.

I was inspired to share this for several reasons. First of all, the core work of Anchored is, yes, about overcoming our codependent, perfectionist and people-pleasing habits. And that work is based in reclaiming our bodily or somatic connection with self. Reclaiming our presence, and learning to regulate or balance our nervous systems.

So, we can live life from a new story, not just in our minds, but in our bodies, as well. And the way there, the pathway to reclaiming our minds, rewiring our thinking back towards ourselves, and away from the lessons we've learned about our worth from our family blueprint, the patriarchy,

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

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

white settler colonialism, on and on, is by reconnecting with self through presence.

We learned to believe and operate from the story that we don't have inherent worth unless we're putting everyone and everything ahead of ourselves, and thereby getting validation from others. And the body knows a different story. Your body knows just how magical and miraculous and amazing you are, and wants you to remember that, and so do I.

So, it behooves us to pay attention to our bodies. And for those of us who find it challenging, or not super safe, to drop into our bodies and into presence internally. Either, because we've been living from our heads for so long, putting ourselves and our bodies dead last for so long, taking care of everyone else's hunger, thirst, et cetera, first, for so long. That being present in life, especially inside our bodies is just confusing.

It's a thing we aren't familiar with. And yeah, it's gonna take a hot minute to remember how to feel our own lifeforce energy in our bodies, and to get present within. And, that's totally okay. And, normal. Makes a lot of sense, actually. Right?

And for those of us whose experience of stress, distress, and trauma was in our actual bodies, as in the case of physical or sexual abuse, assault, or other trauma, then going inside can feel super unsafe; which also makes a wicked amount of sense, right? And thereby, it makes so much sense that we are detached from our biological impulses.

And yes, nerd alert, are our needs as mammals that we learned to subsume or push aside. Heating, eating, burping, passing gas, we learned to ignore these signals from within. And when we go to school, we're actively taught that we can't eat, or drink, or pee whenever we want to. And that burping and passing gas are rude, and we're gonna get shamed about it.

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

So, we learn to ignore those signals from within, and to carry on from our minds. And one of the first things we can do, is to focus on our taller, or toddlerhood, by getting back in touch with our biological impulses as mammals. As the pathway to somatic or body-based connection with self.

And from there, from that basic connection with self, we can grow our capacity to do what I can do now, after many years of practice, which is to name my emotions as a felt experience in my body. You've heard me do it before. For example, this sadness feels like a deep blue wave in my belly pulling me under it, for example.

And from there, we can do what we do every week in Anchored, which is to get into conversation with those energies, those felt experiences, those emotions within, to ask them what they want and need, for and from us. So, we can start to meet our own needs through our bodies, which is a beautiful and life changing practice, I must say.

And for many of us, the antecedent to going inside and reclaiming internal presence, the thing to start with, are simple and mammalian. And remember, that when I say simple, I never mean easy. Because that's BS and is definitely not a nervous system thoughtful thing to say, at all, right?

So, these things are simple. And for many of us, there may be emotional, or energetic, or historical blocks within us to doing these things. And the more we can bring our awareness, care, and love, towards the taking care of us, the more we're moving towards taking care of us, right?

The second reason I want to share this, is this; we can use thought work against ourselves in a lot of ways. And yes, I'll do a whole show on that, because it's really important. And meanwhile, one of the key ways we do that is by staying in our heads, and forgetting that mind and body are one. And that if your body isn't happy, it's hard for you, your nervous system, your inner children, your thoughts, to be happy.

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

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

When you apply to Anchored, you get presents, because I love you. And one of those amazing presents is an invitation to get coached by me live, for free, on a somatic coaching call I do over Zoom™. Pretty cool, right? And it's so much fun, because I get to meet you all before we start Anchored together. I get to do my most favoritest thing in the world, which is to coach. So much joy; I love coaching.

And on this last call, a fellow nurse, hello fellow nurse, you know who you are, shared that she had recently stopped a psychoactive medication for ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). And the thoughts that kept coming to her head like a tsunami were, I feel, unmanageable and out of control. And she tried to do all this thought work on it and her body was, in her words, “Mas o menos” screaming at her. And she kept saying the thought work wasn't working.

To which, I very lovingly said, of course it isn't my darling. You just stopped a very powerful stimulant. And your body is frantically trying to regain equilibrium, and homeostasis, and rebalance, for the absence of a revver-upper drug. And of course, you feel bananas out of control, my beauty. That makes sense.

So, when we have a change in life, whether it's starting or stopping a medication, or a changing relationship, job, housing, a loss, a gain, our bodies need time, love, compassion, to equilibrate to the new reality. When those moments of transition, those liminal spaces in between here and there, are times when we benefit greatly from paying enormous attention to the fact that we are taller toddlers.

When it behooves us to give significant attention to the seemingly little things, that are massive things for body. Because if not, we're gonna stay in that spin in our minds that say, this moment requires thought work. A cognitive solution I can muscle through, push through, which we talked about last episode, I am not in favor of.

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

When in fact, if we pause, we might remember that we need to start with the body and then come back to the mind, or our habitual go-to thoughts will feel like facts within us. And this wonderful human I was coaching, shared that she was believing the thought that she was out of control. And that was keeping her stuck and spinning in the past, present, and future, with thoughts like; it'll always be this way. And effectively, I'm doomed.

So, whenever your brain starts to attack you, to tell you you're an eff-up, no good, always make mistakes, can't change. Habit change are stuck or stagnant. Or, your brain starts to lash out at others; he's a jerk. She's a jerk. They're the worst. I'll invite you to come back to your perfect body to see what you need, toddler style.

So, here are some questions that I'll invite you to ask yourself, and yeah, I'm about to go super-duper basic on you. And that's the point, my darling, Because we get so busy, so externally focused, so other focused, so task and productivity and outside world focused, that we get into a spin and forget to attend to ourselves.

And definitely forget to ask ourselves, when we're in the middle of some kind of thought spiral, have I nourished myself today? Now, that doesn't just mean food. It means nourishment. Meaning, sweetness, tenderness, loving yourself up, or letting someone else give you love. Have I gotten enough nourishment lately?

And if not, how can you give that to you? Or, connect with a person or animal that can show you some love, and can support you in co-regulating your nervous system? Have I had enough water today? Where in my menstrual cycle, am I?

And for humans who don't menstruate or don't have a uterus, you're still 70% water and are also deeply impacted by the moon and the tide. So,



## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

what's up for your body and your hormones today? For more on this, look up my amazing friend and colleague, Maisie Hill.

This one came up in our weekly Anchor coaching, today. Have you experienced grief or loss? And is today's mood or energy just an expectable ripple of that recent grief, that years ago grief? Or, is there an anniversary of a death, or a birth? Or, another date around the corner, impacting your energy, mindset, and body? Do you need rest? Do you need to process that grief? Ask your body what it may need.

Next up, have I eaten enough? Am I just irritable because I am hangry; hangry is super real. By which I mean, imbalanced blood sugar, right? Is your glucose off? Maybe you've eaten but did you get enough calories? Did you get enough nutrient dense foods? Did you get the amount of carbs and veggies and protein that your body needs? Did you get enough fat? I love fat.

I'm not even hungry, but like, I mention fat and I actually start salivating. Humans, what are you going to do? But really, like have you gotten enough nourishment, the right kind of calories for you? The ones that make your body feel happy, nourished, and taken care of? How did you eat them? Were you eating from ventral vagal, meaning with calm and peace in your heart? Or, were you eating on the go?

And listen, I get it. It's not always possible to like, sit down and meditate before you eat. I was a primary care provider in many very busy clinics for quite a while, so I get being busy and rushed by your job. And sometimes what feels possible is shoving half a Ruben down your throat, while you're doing your patient charts. Because if you don't eat now, you can't eat for another four or eight hours.

I get it, sometimes you really do only have eight minutes to eat. And if you know me, you know I'm practical. So, no shaming, no stress; quite the

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



## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

opposite. When you have only eight minutes to eat, that is the time when I believe it is most important to add a millisecond to your process. And to take a breath and to ground yourself before eating, to put both feet on the floor.

It can really take just that quick a moment, to allow your body to go into that parasympathetic, safe, and social place. Where you're going to get the nutrients and nourishment out of your food. It really might just be one breath away, my darling.

Next, sleep. Am I irritated, annoyed, out of sorts, sad, grumpy, angry, whatever, because I didn't sleep well last night, or because I haven't slept well in a month, or six? What's going on with my sleep? Sleep is enormous for our mental and physical wellness, and our nervous system's capacity to step into presence.

Because when we're not sleeping well, our bodies believe we're under attack. Because we haven't had a chance to do all the things that happen in a body, when it's in proper airplane mode. We haven't been able to detox properly, or absorb our nutrients, on and on. And if you have chronic insomnia, I see you. It can be so incredibly challenging.

And whatever your sleep situation, I'm never saying you're doing anything wrong, or that you're effing up. I just want to invite you to take this as an invitation to bring in more self-compassion. And to say; I want to acknowledge and honor, that part of why things have felt so challenging today, or lately, is because I'm sleep deprived.

And one of the things I'll bring your attention to, is the habit of looking at our screens way too late at night. We may be sleeping enough hours, but we're not getting that really deep restful sleep we need, if we're looking at blue screens after dark, to be real, but particularly right before bed. Because

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

those screens, with all that shiny blue light, turn off your endogenous or self-made melatonin.

Which means, that you're not getting the full set of biochemical signals that your body needs, to find a truly restful sleep. Even if you are taking a melatonin pill. Bodies like the real deal better, you know what I mean?

So, the remedy there is to begin to ask yourself, what is your relationship to sleep? And does that relationship honor you as both, the adult and the taller toddler within? Would you give your bedtime routine to a little kiddo? And if so, what would the next day feel like, if you kept a toddler up until midnight, 1-2-3am doom scrolling?

I'm just gonna cut to the finish here and tell you, it won't be cute for anyone involved. So, the remedy here, is to make a commitment, to establishing a solid bedtime and sticking to it. No matter how alluring the blue light boxes are. And this both, helps us to optimize our tomorrows, and helps us somatically. Because it puts us back in touch with our body's sleepiness signals.

And once we feel that first little drop of tired, we get to practice honoring that, by going the eff- to bed before we get overtired, which is a real thing in both kids and adults. And the shorthand is, we get a second wind, right? We get that tired but wired cortisol spike, and it can be very challenging to put ourselves to sleep, once that happens.

So, as soon as you feel tired, like hopping right in the shower, or doing whatever your bedtime routine is, and going to bed, is really going to help you to find a way back into a circadian rhythm that really supports you.

And listen, I like fun. I'm not saying to not watch a movie on a Saturday night. What I'm saying is that habitually looking at blue screens after dark

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

messes up our circadian rhythms. And thus, it can be a reason why your thoughts are running to self-blame or meanness. Why you're irritable, et cetera, and is certainly something worth looking at.

And that brings us to my next point, which is caffeine. And I'm about to make myself really unpopular, right now. And, I'm here for it. I'm just here for it. So, caffeine can be very challenging for some bodies and nervous systems. Because it's this external stimulant that overrides our body's wisdom. That wisdom that tells us we are tired and need rest. Then, instead, caffeine makes us feel like we're just fine, thank you very much.

And it sort of makes us feel like staying up too late, or otherwise not getting the appropriate sleep. It's like it erases it from our minds, because we're stimulated externally by the caffeine, which further takes us out of our body's rhythms, and then we're tired. So, we have more caffeine, and then we don't sleep well, we wake up foggy, we need caffeine, on and on.

So, having too much caffeine or too little, if you're accustomed to a certain amount, can absolutely be a cause of irritability, or taller toddler grumps. And one of the things I recommend, especially for folks who have low grade, or chronic anxiety, depression, or other mood concerns, and for everyone not sleeping optimally, is to do a trial off caffeine, for a week or so to see what happens.

And I actually think this is a good idea for all of us to do, because why not? Right? Because if you've been drinking it every day since forever, how do you know what it's doing to your body, your mood, your energy, now? How do you know what it feels like to be off of stimulants? How do you know what full presence in your body feels like, in the absence of caffeine?

I didn't know the depth and breadth of my capacity to be present in and with myself, until I stopped drinking caffeine. I was drinking chimarrão maté, the caffeine of my people. And I was drinking way too much. I was

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

not in right relationship with it. And, stopping it has been an amazing gift to myself.

And of course, my darlings, please don't quit cold turkey, you need to decrease your daily milligram intake very slowly, or you'll get a killer headache. And there are tons of places online, where folks will talk you through this. So, titrate, go slowly, no massive headaches, please.

Another thing it behooves me to say, is that our biological reaction to drugs like caffeine, is super individual and genetic. My date can have a cup of full caffeine coffee at like, midnight, and then go to sleep two minutes later. That's their genetics.

And now that I've been off caffeine for so long, if I had, I don't know, a full cup of Earl Grey™, I would be a little shaky. I'd be a little, huh, yeah, maybe anxious. A second cup of black tea, and I'd be like wicked anxious. But with one, I know I would just be a less embodied and less pleasant version of myself, and I don't like it. I don't want to show up for my life and the world that way.

So, maybe caffeine works great for you. Congrats. It's not without its benefits, and that's awesome. Good for you, rock it out. And still, you don't know what it's doing until you come all the way off it. The kitten step here is to only have caffeine before 12, noon. Because the half-life is four to eight hours on average. So, if you have a cup of coffee at 2pm, then, depending on your metabolism, it's like you got half a cup between 4pm and 8pm.

So, if you're not sleeping well, you're waking up exhausted, you're irritable in the evenings. It's something curious, to get curious about. Like, does caffeine actually or still work for your body? Are you just having it too late in the day? Are you having the wrong kind of caffeine for your body?

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

So, coffee, even decaf, completely jacks me. But like, half a cup of Earl Grey can feel quite nice. A little bit of mate, here and there, also fine, right? So, getting to know yourself, your liver, your digestion, your metabolism; really helpful, right?

Next, in a continued effort to make myself even less popular, alcohol. As always, and before we dive in here, I am not demonizing anything. Alcohol is not the devil. I'm just sharing science. So, you can make your own decisions, because you are a taller toddler, but you're also grown.

So, alcohol disrupts our sleep architecture, which means you're physiologically not sleeping as well or as deeply, when you've ingested alcohol. And that could be playing a part in you feeling irritable, annoyed, mean to yourself, or using thought work against yourself the next day. So, when that's happening, I'll invite you to get curious. To ask yourself; what substances have I ingested? And how might they be impacting my mood, energy, and sense of self?

Because our biological capacity to digest alcohol and other substances, changes with time. So, just because you could house it in college, doesn't mean that one Martini isn't a root cause of you being a cranky pants today. So, just like with caffeine, getting curious is the invitation. Where you go from there, is up to you. And, I will encourage you to get curious.

Next up; movement. And I'll start with saying this, I'm never talking about movement towards a goal of making yourself smaller for the male gaze; 0% ever. Health at all sizes, end of story. So, movement. We need it as mammals. If we don't get it, grumperoniness, sluggishness, et cetera, are bound to arrive sooner or later.

An ex of mine had no real movement in their life. And every single day, multiple times a day, for years, they would talk about how they were so

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

tired. And on the rare occasion they would go for a walk with me, I didn't hear the same story, and their mood was slightly less grumpatronic.

For a human like me, daily movement is not optional. I need to move energy through my body and out. And folks with other constitutions, may need movement to generate the energy they need to show up for life as their favorite self. So, whichever feels true for you, when you're in a mood that doesn't feel loving, if you're being mean to you, or snappy at others, try a short walk, flow through a vinyasa.

If you're in a wheelchair and can move your arms, maybe move your hands overhead, or do some weights. If you can stand, do some jumping jacks; push-ups are my favorite, they bring me right into presence. And give your taller toddler self, the opportunity to reset and change the channel with movement. Whatever works for you, my darling.

Remember, we evolved as a species to run from things, to be active animals. And our sedentary, modern-day lifestyle of literally just sitting all day at a computer, thanks capitalism, is just not great for us. And so, setting movement reminders on your phone, connecting with a movement buddy, or doing whatever you need to do, so you don't get to the point of being annoyed, irritated, or out of character for yourself, can be really, really helpful.

And using our tool of the minimum baseline, which we talked about in Episode 78, is a really great way to start building trust with yourself, that you're actually going to engage in whatever movement or other self-love practice is right for you.

And my darling, I really want to encourage you to listen to and honor your biological impulses, as a really vital way to build your somatic connection with self, and to help your body to remember that it really can trust you to

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

do what's right for you. So, by that I mean; to pee, to eat, to fart, to burp, to move, to be silent, et cetera, when those needs arise.

We've been socialized and conditioned to keep our humaneness at bay, lest we offend someone's delicate sensibilities. And I get it, like, I don't want people burping in my face. But also like, let's hold space for our humaneness. Right? Humans burp, we pass gas, and sure you can go to the bathroom to do it, but my point is to do it. Don't hold it in. Don't deny your biological impulses, my love. Toddlers, sure don't. So why should you?

And finally, ask yourself if you're physically comfortable in this moment? Because that matters, and impacts your felt experience of life, your nervous system, and thus your thoughts and feelings? Are you sitting comfortably? Are you doing that thing, that we often do from our people-pleasing habits, of sitting or standing in an uncomfortable way and not wanting to move because you don't want to bother or disturb someone else?

Ask your body, does it want to move? To stand, to sit, to lie on the floor, to shake around like a leaf in the wind? Are your shoes too tight? What about your bra? I'm serious. Are you physically comfortable or not? Because few things will evoke a toddler tantrum like an ill-fitting brassiere. Am I right?

And finally, if you're feeling stressed or irritable, and you've checked in with your toddler's needs to see what a possible physical cause of that experience is. And you've attended to yourself as the beautiful animal you are, then it's time to get curious.

As folks with codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thinking, living in the patriarchy, and some guiding questions may be, where have I been putting others ahead of myself? How have I been negating my own needs? Am I carrying a grump or resentment in my heart about that?

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



## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

Do I feel like someone owes me one for doing something kind for them? Did I not set a boundary? Or, did I semi set a boundary and then not carry it out? Am I holding on to guilt, shame, blame? Am I telling a story about myself or others, that's coloring how I'm seeing the whole world?

Taking a moment to get curious about your thinking can be really helpful. Totally question your thoughts. And one of the big things we do in thought work is to tease out, what is a fact and what is a thought or a belief? Because our brains often don't know the difference.

And believing a thought like; I'm out of control or he's a complete jerk, are facts, when they're just our thoughts about things, that can lead us to stay in the belief that life is against us. And that's when you can start to use the thought work I've taught you in many, many, many episodes, but particularly 107. That's a good place to start thought work 101.

To start to sort out what the 'what' is in your own mind. But of course, first, a nap, a snack, some jumping jacks, some quiet breaths, or whatever your perfect taller toddler body wants for you. My perfect tenderoni, above all, keep it simple, keep it actionable, and focused on getting curious, first. Step into being your own watcher to start to suss out what is making you feel which kind of way, and from there, start to work on one factor at a time.

Taking small, manageable steps using the minimum baseline, if that resonates for you, towards living a life your inner toddler would be thrilled to live. Above all, be as kind, and compassionate, and loving, towards you, as you would be towards an actual toddler having a challenging day.

Remember, you can't heal hurt with more hurt. And the most loving path is always the firmly gentle and curious one. Thanks for listening, my love. I hope that my latest interesting metaphor has been helpful for you. You all seem to love "be the cake", so I figure why not be the taller... taller

## Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts

toddler... taller toddler; it's harder to think than you say it is. Nope. It's harder to say than you think it is. Give it a try, taller toddler.

As always, it's been a delight. Thank you for listening, my sweet love. If you are not following me on the 'Gram, I'd recommend it. I give good 'Gram over @VictoriaAlbinaWellness. And I'm flagging that, because I'm doing a bunch of really fun, free webinars and low-cost workshops. And I announce those on my email list and on the 'Gram.

So, if you're following me in both places, you're gonna get a double dose of reminders to come get the free goods. Because, why not? Right? The price is right, let me tell you what. Finally, if you have not applied to Anchored, my goodness, why? Anchored is my favorite place on earth. It is the most beautiful community of loving, kind, wonderful, supportive humans.

Humans socialized as women, who are gathered together for our collective healing, to reclaim our somatic or bodily experience of life, to become embodied once more, to regulate our nervous systems, to nerd out about all the science and psychology of being a human, to have dance parties.

We're having one next Tuesday, it's going to be amazing. To do breathwork, which we're doing tonight. And to really do some deep, deep, deep dive coaching. To really start to see the thing under the thing, under the thing, that's keeping us feeling stuck and spinning in old thoughts, beliefs, and lived experiences.

Anchored is the place to be if you want to change your life in a sustainable, holistic way for the long term. And if you want to do it with me, because I'm pretty much very, very fun. And we have a really, really good time overcoming our codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing habits. Because laughter and levity are good for the nervous system.

## **Ep #190: When It's Not Just Your Thoughts**

All right, my darlings, head on over to [VictoriaAlbina.com/anchored](https://VictoriaAlbina.com/anchored) to learn all about it and to apply now. And then you'll get invitations to super special secret events so you can't lose.

Alright, my beauty, let's do what we do. A gentle hand on your heart, should you feel so moved. And remember, you are safe. You are held. You are loved. And, when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my beauty. I'll talk to you soon.

If you've been enjoying the show and learning a ton, it's time to apply it with my expert guidance, so you can live life with intention, without the anxiety, overwhelm and resentment, so you can get unstuck. You're not going to want to miss the opportunity to join my exclusive, intimate group-coaching program. So, head on over to [VictoriaAlbina.com/masterclass](https://VictoriaAlbina.com/masterclass) to grab your seat now. See you there; it's gonna be a good one!