

Ep #230: Needs: How to Recognize & Voice Them (Part 1)



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. By the time you hear this, I will be off on some delicious and delightful summer vacation. First up, Madrid. I'm so thrilled, we're going to have such a good time. I just can't wait.

My dear friend Rob and his wife are staying at our house while we're out of town. They're going to do a little house sit, but also get out of the city and enjoy the country life and eat fistfuls of blueberries off the trees and stare at the adorable bunnies.

Ah, I'm just so grateful for my life, for my community, for all my privilege and capacity to travel. There really isn't a day that I don't wake up ridiculously happy and grateful. I just wanted to share that with you because it feels really nice to be grateful. Because I used to have more dark days than I had bright ones. The shift has been absolutely incredible.

One of the things that has really, really helped bring me into more gratitude, and that gratitude has helped me to achieve in my life is knowing what I need, speaking about what I need, a whole conversation about needs. So, I hope that you listen to my conversation with my dear friend and colleague, Mara Glatzel, all about needs.

She wrote a book all about needs called *Needy*. Very smart there. I blurbbed it, which means I read it in advance and shared my praise for it because it was really, really good. I highly recommend it. The book is fabulous. Our conversation was a delight. Mara is just a gem and a half. Yeah, I'm so grateful to have friends like her.

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So, I've heard from y'all that you love a series. You love when I talk about a subject from different angles and in different ways, and with lots of very real examples over the course of several weeks. So, we are going to do a two-part series talking about needs.

How folks with emotional outsourcing habits, which we are about to define, relate to having needs. How we asked to get them met, or don't. Some common problems with expressing our needs. Most importantly, in next week's show, what we can do to balance it all out towards the goal of living more interdependently. I'm also going to challenge a commonly held belief about codependency and needs, so keep listening. It's going to be a good one. Haven't said that in a hot minute on the show, hmm?

Before we dive in, I was looking at the numbers recently, and it does appear that there are a whole lot of new people around here. So, my darlings, welcome, bienvenidos. Welcome to *Feminist Wellness*. I'm so glad you're here. Thank you to whomever shared the show with you, whoever posted it to their social media and helped spread the word, or told their patient. I'm just so grateful that you're here.

So, let's start with the definition of codependency that we use around here. Because it's different than what you usually hear out in the world. We don't talk, I mean, I don't talk, I'm the only one talking here. I should use the correct proper first-person pronoun. I don't talk about codependent people, because that label is so limiting.

It can lead us to believe that we are perma-effed and just wading through day by day, trying to not be a codependent hot mess today. Instead of understanding that we don't need to label ourselves in these painful ways. We can actually change, in real ways, to live life interdependently. Our old codependent habits are just survival skills and we can learn new ones.

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So, I talk about emotional outsourcing, which is a term I created for the experiences of codependency, perfectionism, and people pleasing, that arise from early experiences where we learned to prioritize other's needs above our own. Sacrificing our wellbeing and sense of self in the process, towards the goal. Because of course, we don't do anything as humans unless there's a goal, right?

Toward the goal of feeling or being safer, towards more belonging. Even if it was false belonging, right? Even if we were being liked for being a false version of ourselves, belonging keeps you safer than not belonging, right? We shape-shifted and gave ourselves away, chameleoned towards mattering to our family, our community, our society.

We learned, as emotional outsourcers, to attempt to derive our sense of wellness, value, worth, and safety in the world from everyone and everything outside ourselves, instead of from within. Because at our core, we worry that we just aren't worthy of love, care, good things. Often, because that's what we learned directly or indirectly in childhood. So, that is the pattern that was written into our nervous system.

Luckily, that is a pattern that we can rewrite and change. We can regulate around it. Folks with emotional outsourcing thinking and living often struggle with setting boundaries. Which makes a lot of sense, if what everyone else thinks of you as the most important thing, way more important than what *you* think about you, then saying no or voicing a limit is, frankly, just plain dumb.

Because it could lead to rejection, abandonment, criticism, conflict. All things that could get you kicked out of the village. Then, when the marauders or the lions come, who's going to get made a snack? You are. You're smarter than that, right? So, you keep your mouth shut, and you try to toe the line towards safety.

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The same holds with expressing needs. Doing so can feel super risky, and yeah, really dumb. When someone's saying no, or declining your request, it feels like a rejection of the core of who you are, which is often the case in emotional outsourcing. We have the habit of taking things hyper personally, because we fear nothing is actually about us. Isn't that just a mind-eff, for sure?

This was the case for me, that fear of rejection or being told I was demanding, which is something I heard constantly in childhood, about having very basic human wants and needs, kept me from living interdependently for most of my life.

Interdependence is when two people in a relationship recognize one another's autonomy and honor it. Living with mutuality and reciprocity in the give and take of having needs and wants. This is the antidote to codependent thinking and emotional outsourcing. I'll also add here that my partner calls it "mutuocity"; the love child of mutuality and reciprocity. I think that is so adorable, and just so fabulous. Mutuocity, 10 points to her.

From an emotional outsourcing mindset, which often comes from being raised in emotional outsourcing because it's often intergenerational, recognizing our own needs can feel super foreign. Like, not a thing we know how to do. Especially when we didn't see it modeled for us in healthy ways growing up.

Yeah, I have my little pot in the air saying, "Me, too." Because I certainly did not see healthy needs, base request making, growing up. That's not what we did. That's what's common for us, and so, we can find it wicked challenging. Oh, and that's hella challenging for the West Coast; always trying to keep it inclusive over here.

We often carry stories that our needs aren't important or are a burden. Other people's needs, which we over attend to as a habit, are worthy of us

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hopping to, to take care of. Displacing our needs, and instead taking care of theirs first. That can look like getting up from the dinner table because someone wants a condiment. Someone who can totally go get it themselves, by the way. Not, like a toddler in a highchair.

Making sure everyone else has everything they need, which leaves our needs dead last. Schlepping everyone else to lessons, events, et cetera, and rarely making time for our own movement, friend hangs, et cetera.

Or we do manage to attend to those needs, those wants, those desires, those things that make us feel whole, but honestly, we feel pretty darn guilty for it while we're doing it. Like, we're being terrible, selfish humans, particularly for those of us socialized as women; women are not to be selfish. We are to put everyone ahead of ourselves, right?

So, we feel bad if we take care of ourselves instead of attending to the invisible and exhausting labor that most of us were trained to provide for everyone in our lives. Yeah, our needs feel burdensome, selfish or inconsequential compared to the needs of others, especially as women in the patriarchy.

Asking for our needs to be met can make us feel super scared, because it is quite vulnerable making to voice what's real. Especially when we're not used to it and don't have the capacity in our nervous systems to hold ourselves in safety when we do it.

It's no shocker that all this over giving, while ignoring ourselves, leads to feelings of resentment, exhaustion, and a loss of identity over time. Not to mention, the ping-ponging nervous system that bounces from sympathetic to dorsal and back again, a bajillion times, as we debate asking for help. Reminding ourselves that help is for everyone but us, and go back and forth forever.

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We have a tendency to minimize or apologize for our needs. Diluting the message in an effort to avoid discomfort or potential conflict. Which can sound like,

“I mean, I would really love it if you could help. I mean, I'm like completely overwhelmed. I haven't really slept in three days. But like, if you're busy or whatever, or you just like kind of don't feel like it, or you want to watch TV or like, I don't know, go sit on a rock somewhere, like, that's totally fine. It's fine. I'm just like, literally, actually, bleeding out. I have this really big cut, and I'm dying. But it's fine. I'll totally organize the spice drawer. Don't worry about it.”

We carry a fear of being perceived as selfish or needy. In continuing to carry that fear, which no one's ever throwing rocks at anyone out here, right? I'm just saying what the “what” is, we inadvertently and unwittingly perpetuate a cycle where we consistently put ourselves last. Leaving our needs unmet, and our well-being compromised.

My beauty, my sweet, tender ravioli, as humans, we are pack animals. We do actually need one another. This is a central point I want to make; it is not a problem to need others. The problem arises when we don't ask for support, as we just detailed. Or when we speak our needs in less than awesome ways; which we'll get to in a moment.

Meanwhile, the dominant narrative around codependency and “recovery” from it, gets this way wrong, in stigmatizing and pathologizing needing others. Calling it a sign of being “sick” with codependency, thereby extolling the virtues of meeting all your own needs. I see this kind of thinking all the time in my patients, who have spent time in spaces that encourage a heavy and hefty focus on independence in lieu of interdependence.

It can be really painful and harmful because it keeps folks from finding the kind of balanced give-and-take around needs that is so important to our

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overall wellness. Because, science. Also, because, tender ravioli, right? That is, the rugged, individualism-fueled push to meet all your own needs, to not depend on anyone, or you're a codependent, is not only not based on the science of being a human, but that also sounds really sad and lonely and not fun to me.

Also, when it was what I did, it was not anything but sad, lonely and not fun. I don't want to go it alone because I love people. I love helping others. Now that I have the capacity in my nervous system to receive love and care... Which is something I got to work out. It's not something I came into adulthood with the capacity to just do.

Now, having done all this work the last decade plus, I love needing others. Relying on them. Taking them at their word. Asking them for help. Asking my partner to help with something. Like, she just cleaned the whole kitchen while I was doing this. Yeah, sure, I had like a trickle of guilt. But it didn't overwhelm me or flood me or, like it would have in the past, lead me to not record this podcast and instead go mop the floor. So, that's the shift, right?

I love asking others to take over a task, to hug me with the deep pressure my magical, ADHD, brain-body loves. I love counting on my girls; on Marie, on Alessandra, on Rob; who's not one of my girls, but kind of. To have my back and to support me personally and professionally. On and on.

I love needing others so much now, because interdependence feels glorious, my darlings. My people know that I have their back 100%, and I know that they've got mine. That old school story, that in order to overcome codependency we need to not need people, is false, false, false. Believing it keeps us in this binary thinking around needs, that keeps us reactive to life, to other people.

It keeps us detached from our own somatic, or bodily, knowing about what we need in order to thrive in life. Because the issue is not actually us

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having needs or counting on the people you are interdependent on to meet them when they are able. It is normal, natural and human to have needs. Let me say that again for the folks in the back. Of course, you have needs, you're a human.

Of course, you want the people you love and care about to care about your needs and to support you in meeting them. That also makes so much sense, and is so normal and not a problem. What becomes a problem is how we go about trying to get our needs met from our emotional outsourcing habits.

Generally, from the wounding that says, "It's not okay for me to have needs, per se. I'm not worthy of being taken care of. Especially if I haven't earned it, or they haven't earned our love." The old tit-for-tat style of relating that so many of us grew up with, and are living in to this day.

When we expect others to self-abandon as hard as we do, we are creating a painful morass of back-and-forth resentment, that is poisonous to our sense of self, and to all of our relationships.

If you haven't listened to the two-part series I recently shared, all about self-abandonment, I would highly recommend that before we meet up again next week to talk about some examples of how we kinda, sorta attempt to ask that our needs get met. But oh, kind of just stir up trouble and stuff instead.

We'll be talking all about passive aggression next week, and on a future show, all about aggressive aggression. Which is like passive-aggressive aggressive. When people don't realize they're being too direct or aggressive direct. But yeah, from the same wounding, from that same emotional outsourcing place.

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So, we're going to hit pause on this week in talking about needs, because this is a lot, right? A lot of us carry a lot of confusion around our needs. Whether it's okay to have needs. Whether it's okay for others to have needs. We might think it's super demanding for others to have needs. I mean, that's a good point, let me make that point.

I had this realization maybe 5, 10 years ago. At a certain age, it all gets blurry, which is just as well. I'll do a whole show about this. This is such a good topic. I was getting mad at, annoyed at, irritated by, was just generally judgmental of people who were doing things, particularly things for their wellness and their overall good, that I didn't feel that it was okay for me to do. Right?

So, if someone was like, "Hey, I'd really like to get this need met, are you available?" I'd be irritated. I'd be like, "Ugh, whatever." That was coming from that story that it was not an okay thing to do. Because I did very much literally grow up hearing, when I'd be like, "Can I have a basic need?" And please, I had all my basic needs met in childhood. My parents 100% did that. Plus, plus, plus; we had karate lessons and ballet and all the things.

But the emotional needs, when I would ask for those to get met, that's when I was told I was being demanding. So, I have this story in my head. I also didn't see my parents naming their needs or their emotions, asking for them to be met in kind, loving, gentle ways. Communication was not the forte in my household. It was not a healthy, direct communication.

So, just this, what we've been learning about today, that it's okay to have needs, it's important to have needs, it's a vital part of being a human to have needs, can be a lot. I want to invite you to sit with it. Your homework this week, is to start to take a look at what comes up within your mind, within your body, what the felt sensation in your body is. This is a somatic, or body-based, modality cue, right?

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What does it feel like in your body when you have a need? It can be something as simple as, you're sitting down at the dinner table and you really... Well, this is a want, right?... You want hot sauce. Or you need water, and you can't reach it. You need to ask someone to help you.

Let's say you're trapped breastfeeding a baby, and you can't get up or there will be so much crying. What does it feel like in your body to recognize that you have a need, and it would be optimal for someone else to support you in that? Does it make you want to barf? Is it super easy, and you're like, "I don't understand why we're even talking about this?"

Does it feel really squiggly and uncomfortable? Does it make you want to hide? Does it make you angry? What is the emotion that comes up? Then, what is the feeling that goes with it? What is the sensation in your body that arises with that emotion around needs?

That's your homework, my beauty, to pay attention to your own needs. You've got this, truly. You can learn how to know what you need. Speak it, and be cool if someone says no. Be cool if someone says, yes. It's quite a skill, and for most of us it's quite a journey. I'm here with you every step of the way. All right, my beauties. Thanks for listening.

If you're loving the show, please head on over to Apple podcasts, or wherever you get your shows, and give it a five-star rating and a written review. It helps others to find the show through search, which helps to spread this completely free resource, which is my way of being of service, into as many ears as possible.

So, I want to thank you in advance for doing that. Giving that rating and review, sharing on social media, sharing with your communities. I'm grateful. Thank you.

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All right, my loves, let's do what we do. Gentle hand on your heart, should you feel so moved. Remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. When one of us heals, you help heal the world. Be well, my tender ravioli. I'll talk to you soon.

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