

**Ep #249: Food, Weight & Diet Talk: How to Find
Greater Peace and Joy During the Holidays
with Dana Monsees**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

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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. Today, my darlings, is what is commonly referred to as Thanksgiving Day, here in these United States of America. Most people I hang with call it Thankstaking Day more likely than Thanksgiving Day.

Today, we are focusing on how to navigate food, boundaries, body talk, nervous system, families, all have that hot morass of unbridled, free rein... It's amazing.

People often feel like they have free rein to make so many comments about other people's bodies; You've lost weight, you've gained weight, you should lose weight, you should gain weight, what we're eating, what we're not eating. People just rocking right over boundaries, insisting the person with celiac have the gluten. I mean, it's a lot. Families are a lot.

And this time of year can be a lot, particularly for those of us with emotional outsourcing kind of thinking. That is, codependent, perfectionist and people-pleasing thought habits. Things can get real muddled real fast.

Today, I am talking with the delightful, amazing nutritionist, Ms. Dana Monsees, all about these topics; food, boundaries, nervous system, bodies, family. So, we can be prepared, and can have something to say in response for when someone comes at us.

One of the things we really do beautifully in this conversation is really talk about how no food is good or bad, right or wrong. There's no moral weight to food, it's just food. You get to make the best choices for you, your life,

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your body, your health, your wellness, your delight, your passion, your pleasure, your enjoyment. I'm here to support you in that.

You get to do you, and I want to support you in having the language to tell the people you love that you don't really need their point of view on it. Do ya? You don't really... You might appreciate their concern or their caring, but you don't need their words, you don't need their thoughts, their opinions.

So, we're going to get into it. I hope you enjoy this conversation. We will be going back to functional freeze soon. I have some exciting guests coming up. If you're not subscribed to the show, or following the show, wherever you get your podcasts, do that now, please.

I'd really appreciate if you took two seconds and left a five-star rating and a wee "witten weview." I sound like Bugs Bunny. I meant to say, a written review. It can really be like, "This shows great." It doesn't matter, it helps other people find the show in searches.

I am so privileged to have so much education. I studied psychology and medicine and functional medicine and somatic experiencing, and I just want to share all of that as far and wide as possible. And when you leave a rating and review, it helps to get the show into people's ears. So, please take a moment. I hope you enjoy this conversation.

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

Dana Monsees: Hey friend, thanks for having me.

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

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Dana: Yeah, my name is Dana Monsees. I'm a Dietician Nutritionist and body image coach. I live in the Washington DC area, also known as occupied... In New Jersey we call it 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. Yeah, 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." I wanted to have you on, well, A-1 because you're fabulous and amazing. B-2 because I love talking to you.

C-3 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, 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 than the holidays?

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 think when we talk about anxiety and stuff, plan for the worst case scenario, kind of, and then talk yourself through it. Make a plan, right? 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. Let's talk about something else."

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A gentle, diversionary topic. Or coming up with responses based on your personality. Whether you want to be a 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, right? 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 this is going to happen at any given holiday table this season. Whether it's a cousin making a comment, a parent, a grandparent, an aunt or uncle, whoever it is.

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: Right, and what they value in the world. Which is, perhaps, a patriarchal notion that women should be incredibly tiny in order to be worthwhile. Wait a second, if you're tiny, are you even worthwhile? Oh, wait, 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.

Dana: So, there's a bunch of different ways that we can tackle this mindset-wise. I think being prepared going in is really important. To preemptively remind yourself, like Victoria's saying, "Whether or not my body has changed doesn't make me a good or bad person." 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.

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For example, “Oh, I'm going to be bad. I'm going back for seconds. Oh, 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're in an exclusively body-positive or weight-neutral space, they're going to say something like, “Make sure you do this many lunges, steps, or whatever, to make sure you earn your Thanksgiving,” whatever.

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. You never need to earn or burn any food. This is just one day of the year, or a few days of the year, right?

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.

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

Dana: Yes, bring your epi pens, please. Take your precautions here.

Victoria: And Benadryl.

Dana: Yes, 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 certain food, just remind

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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.

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 would bring with me internationally just in case of some either potential cross contamination or a really bad exposure; that would be the charcoal situation. But just taking some precautions and knowing that it's going to be okay.

Victoria: Because 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. Yep, it is.

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

Using thought work, and using all of our mindset tools, to really pull ourselves back to what you were 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.

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Dana: Right. 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.

For example, "I think this is a bad food," so 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, 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, 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's not going to break down the food adequately.

Which means you're probably going to feel a little bit crappy. 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.

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

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could be a gut bacteria imbalance. It could be the nervous system acting up. It could be all of these different things.

So, I always encourage people... which is kind of ironic, because I am a dietician nutritionist, right? People come to me and they're like, "Tell me how to lose weight and tell me what to eat." I'm like, "Okay. Well, no. Let's think beyond the food." And they're like, "Whoa, 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, then have a bellyache, and then stress about the belly ache, and get into these really challenging cycles?

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 spirochete; when I had small intestine bacterial overgrowth, I didn't have thought work yet.

I didn't know how to manage my mindset around these things. Food was really stressful because I didn't know what was going on. I was making that a problem. 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. Right?

When you're filling your brain space with future tripping, or rolling around in the past and 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.

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Dana: Yep. Then the questions become 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 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 the symptoms? And so, it's kind of like a vicious cycle.

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, right?

If you've got parasites, SIBO, all of these other things, there are going to be foods, because their chemical structure... The overgrowth, the bacteria, is like, "Oh, yeah, party time. We're raging in here when you eat certain carbohydrates."

But then, what I would provide as 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, but it 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 years and years and years.

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. There

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was a while where eggs, chicken, all the sulfur-rich foods were absolute no-gos.

Actually, someone offered me salad with chicken on it last night, and something inside me went, “Gasp!” I was like, “Oh, wait a second. That’s old news. That’s old news.”

Dana: You’re like, “Are we good? Are we good?”

Victoria: 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 to, “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. Just pausing, breathing, and loving up on that protector part. Then reminding yourself, from your most loving parent, “Baby, it’s okay. When we eat that, we feel okay now. It’s okay. That’s an old story. It’s ok.”

Dana: I like to draw this analogy for people. If we think about 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. Let’s use sugar. 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 say it’s the first or second holiday season that you’ve been trying to do this thought work, or just trying a different way of thinking, of getting out of this

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all-or-nothing mentality.... you've got to hack down the weeds. You're going to have to move the trees out of 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, right? The other one is easier to go back to. So, your immediate thought is going to be, "Oh, yeah, it's that."

And then it's like, "Whoa, whoa, hold on. There's now a sign on 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?" The guilt tripping comes in, 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. It's okay if you're feeling confused and conflicted and all 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: "Are there any rentals available on your planet?"

Dana: "Any Airbnb's?"

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Victoria: Which brings us to boundaries. Which I think is such a vital issue. Because I hear this all the time, “I was feeling great. Then I went to this family event, and there was this pressure to eat,” whatever. Or even looping back to, “My mom always makes comments about my weight, about my skin, about my hair,” whatever the 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: Yeah, let's see. This was a couple of months ago. Over the summer I had a guest, who was a therapist, on the podcast and she was talking about boundaries. The way she explains it has always stuck with me. She said, “Boundaries are about my side of the street. Ultimatums are about trying to control the other side of the street.”

So, if we think about boundaries, I know a lot of people have a lot of guilt around trying to set these boundaries, especially with family members. 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,”

It's not, for the 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's like, “But it still hurts.” What are we can do, right?

So, acknowledging that they might guilt-trip you hard, and that doesn't feel good. But I think going into that, and saying, “Okay, I understand that this

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pie means a lot to you, but I'm really full right now. Maybe I'll just 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, I'm going to put it there, and nobody better eat it tomorrow."

And you could even drag it out and be like, "I'll be so mad if somebody eats my slice of pie, and 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 pronouns?

Dana: Oh my gosh, yeah, that's going to be... Who are you dating now? And I don't mean "who" like what person, they're referring to, oh, what gender are you dating now? Oh my gosh, come on.

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. Like, "Oh, how is so-and-so doing in their grad school program," or whatever it is; redirecting.

Or pulling out the sass. For example, if someone goes, "Ooh, I don't think you should be eating that." You can turn it around and be like, "What do you mean 'I shouldn't be eating that?' I'm not really sure what you're saying." Generally, if someone says something really rude, turning it around to them and be like, "Oh, what do you mean? I don't really understand. Could you

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repeat that?" Because if they said something really rude, and they're not a really rude person, they'll be like, "Ooh, 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, and 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. Va fan cul."

Victoria: Right. Va fan cul, is pretty much what you're saying right there. Yeah. Or as my dad likes to say, "Good for you." Right? Okay, we all, ahem...

Dana: My grandmother's like, "You got broad shoulders, you can take it." My whole family's from New Jersey.

Victoria: I see where you get that Jersey sass from. Oh, wait, back to boundaries though. I've really gotten to this place in my life... and we baby step our way here, right? So, we may start with what you're offering, which I think is so beautiful, of explaining. Because my focus is supporting folks to shift codependent thinking, making sure you're not justifying. But, maybe, explaining feels really nice to start.

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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." "Well, have a piece of pie." "No, thank you." "But just one piece?" "No, thank you." I just repeat it and smile. Repeat it and smile. That's what I've 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." 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' they/them pronouns. I'm not available to tell you why I don't celebrate Thanksgiving."

Also, I should land acknowledge that 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: It took me many, many, many years to get to here. 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.

Dana: Because it's never simple.

Victoria: Yeah, 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.

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“Oh, just be polite, honey. Just eat what you’re given. Just go along, to get along. Just you don't make her angry. Don't make her sad.”

Dana: “Don't eat too much.”

Victoria: “But don't eat too much, because you’ve got to be skinny, or else you'll never get a good husband.”

Dana: Unless you have parents that are like, “Why you so skinny? You’ve got to eat more. Have you not eaten since last Thanksgiving?”

Victoria: There’s also that. As an Argentine... wait, last I checked, it 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.

Victoria: Fair. That was a long time ago. Someone's going to fact-check me on that, and they're welcome to. Who knows? Anyway, we love that forced skinniness so hard. They talk about maté, the drink of my people, as the drink of the rich and a 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: Yeah, for sure. Also, p.s. I love how meandering our conversations are. It's always the best.

Dana: This is just kind of how it is. Right?

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Victoria: Yeah, especially right now. Alright, 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.

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.

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, or I'm getting shunted down the polyvagal ladder into dorsal freeze."

If you're listening for the first time, and you're like, "What is these wordses?" Head on over to VictoryAlbina.com/podcasts. There's a search box, put in polyvagal, and you'll get a bunch of episodes. Actually, our conversation on your show last week, we talked a lot about polyvagal. So, that's a good resource.

So, conscious distraction is when we recognize, "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 do it all. 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.

When I say that, buffering and food, what comes up for you? Because your face lit up.

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Dana: Another way to think about this, is I explain this to people as a “distraction versus processing.” When we think about stress as unprocessed emotion in the body. So, if we are just like, “Oh, my God, 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 yoga. I'm going to do all these things, and I'm going to let it process out through my body.”

That being said, in the time of Thanksgiving when everything is 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. I mean, buffering itself, when we think about Thanksgiving, yeah, 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, ‘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.’ Then your stomach's like, ‘why did we do that?’ It reinforces the, ‘well, this really is a bad food for me.’

I think it's just that 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. Yeah, 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: I love that framework about processing; processing or not. So, how would you coach someone, if they're in that moment where they're

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reaching for food or beverages, or writ large whatever? Keeping this holiday and food specific, in that moment when you're reaching for the whatever, what would you invite people to say or do, or how to support themselves to pause the buffering cycle?

Dana: 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 and really experience all of the sensations that come with eating.

Especially because when we're around a holiday table, there really are foods that are kind of all or nothing. For example, most people don't eat pumpkin and apple pie outside of November and December, in the U.S., during the year, right?

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 want to, but it's rare that it's going to happen.

So, one of the ways that I encourage people to kind of process through this is, if you are choosing to eat a food, I presume it's because you actually like it, right? 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.

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.’”

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A lot of the reasons that people eat so fast is because they feel bad about the things that they're eating. 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.'

Especially if you are a person that inhabits a larger body, you know that there are people around you who are judging you, 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.

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?" And so, drawing that boundary, and slowing down at the same time. Like, if you love pumpkin pie, slow down and enjoy the pumpkin pie, right? It's 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. 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 in the next day, if I want to...'

Now, again, this is a really hard process to go through. I would never recommend you do this by yourself. Please, work with a practitioner. These

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are the steps to go through if you want to start testing this out today, on Turkey Day, or whatever 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. We're less likely to have the digestive symptoms that go along with this, too. So, that's a double bonus.

Victoria: Yeah, 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."

Recognizing that those all circle back to our self-worth. 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 a vital feminist issue, particularly around food, and the bodies of humans socialized as women. Because our pleasure is a very complicated thing, right?

Particularly in this Judeo-Christian framework of Madonna/whore. You're damned if you do, and damned if you don't. How dare you? Particularly if you're in a larger body, right?

Dana: Sex and food, my God. Come on.

Victoria: Yeah, sex, food, money; three things that women have all sorts of complicated feelings about. Or do thought work, and then don't, right? Find

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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. 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: Yeah, do it slowly, so that 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 of these things and focusing on your food at the same time.

So one, easy, not super committal way, I would say, to work on buffering is, "Okay, right now, 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. Wield that thing is 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, I thought I really liked this, and now that I've given myself permission to eat it, I realized 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, right?

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Now, you're not so much, "I'm going to take the whole pint of Ben & Jerry's to the couch and finish it. Now, it doesn't really do much for me. I'd rather have some cookies. I'd rather have some popcorn, or another," whatever. steaks."

Victoria: Steak, said the Argentine, always more steak.

Dana: Oh, yeah, always. 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 systems. Which is one of the most beautiful ways, I find, to bring myself back into ventral vagal.

Particularly for folks who've experienced stress, distress and trauma, it is an easier, safer feeling way to orient the nervous system and to regulate the nervous system, rather than going into our bodies. 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 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. Maybe you're not...

Victoria: Or doing copious thought work.

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Dana: Or doing copious thought work, that too. Maybe that's just the .1% of all the people. But, yeah, I mean, 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, try them out, and see what works for you.

Victoria: And know that however you show up this year, for this holiday season, again, don't forever-it, right? You don't need to choose to make it like, "Well, setting the boundaries, it didn't work the way I wanted it to this year. 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 or food choices, or 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: If you want to get really meta, it's not even their thoughts. It's thoughts that they've absorbed from something else.

Victoria: Right. Such a great point. Yeah. You don't need to take on other people's socialization and conditioning, as formulated into thoughts by their particular prefrontal cortex.

Dana: Yep.

Victoria: God, I love what a nerd you are. I love to end with a pep talk because I am a Leo; with four different Leo placements. I'm just a positive animal. Except for when I'm in the pits of despair. But like, let's be real.

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Dana: Yeah. 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. Do you know what I used to jokingly say, when I had 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 of that Leo loyalty, right?

I'm just like, "Don't mess with my people. I'm serious about it." But not provolence, 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: Well, 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 my DEA 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?" 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 of that jam. Let's be real.

Alright, you're fantastic.

Dana: Thank you for having me on.

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

Dana: Yeah, let's be the adults.

Victoria: Do you want to say one positive thing, and then I'll say one positive thing? 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. Okay, ready, go.

Dana: Yeah. 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. 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. 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 love that.

Let's end there, because that was so beautiful.

Dana: That's just the virtual hug.

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

Dana: We should see what it looks like when we text each other. "Take me like one of your French ponies." No one's going to get that except us, it's fine.

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

Dana: Okay, so you can find me... Let's see, my website is RealFoodWithDana.com. Instagram is @danamonsees_cns. But just search Dana Monsees, I'll come up.

Victoria: How many e's are in Monsees?

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

Victoria: Here we are. 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, right? In the things that don't really matter at the end of the day. I could get all hospice nursing on that.

Dana: Well, 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, well, 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? What matters to you?

Dana: Thanks. Pretty easy choice.

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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?

Dana: 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 liked these examples of, what do I say in this conversation? We have a freebie that's like a Tough Conversations Guide for how to give some very gentle or sassy responses to a bunch of different holiday conversations. We 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, *Whole-Hearted Eating*.

Victoria: Perfect. We'll put that in the show notes. I've got link and bio on your Instagram, too? 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 a very fine line between professional and all of the nerdiness. And then, also, yeah, we're a little nutty sometimes. What do you want?

Victoria: Right. 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.

Victoria: 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. My authentic self is

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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 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.

Thank you for listening to this episode of *Feminist Wellness*. If you want to learn more all about somatics, what the heck that word means, and why it matters for your life, head on over to VictoriaAlbina.com/somaticswebinar for a free webinar all about it. Have a beautiful day my darling, and I'll see you next week. Ciao.