

Ep #252: What to Expect When You Come Out of Functional Freeze



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. My perfect tender raviolis, I think about you all the time when I sit at my desk. I'm writing my book, it comes out in 2025. It's just so weird. It's so far away. But my multi-screen, whole note setup sits right next to my microphone and so, I often look at it and I think of you.

I think of you going on your little walks, doing the dishes, just being in the car, and just doing your little lives and listening to my show. You can probably hear it, right? My cheeks hurt from joy thinking about it.

I love hearing from you. I love your DMs. I love your emails to podcast@victoriaalbina.com. I love it when you rate and review the show, which, actually, really helps to get it into more ears. It's a free resource; help me spread it everywhere by rating and reviewing.

Especially the written review. Give me like, three words, "Show is great. It really helps." Where was I going? Hello, ADHD, my old friend. I was going to... I love you. I love making this show for you. It's a whole lot of work, and it's such a gift. I'm happy to be here.

I was going to... I love hearing from you. Because we did quite a little foray into functional freeze, somatic self-disconnection. We did Episodes 246, 247, 248, a wee series, just a few weeks ago; all about it. And you all have been busy on those keyboards; you've been giving those thumbs a workout.

I heard from several people who asked me to talk about what happens when we come out of functional freeze, and it's a super-duper important

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topic. Because it's really cute and all, to be like, "Do these things to not have this nervous system reaction." That's cool; but physics, right? Equal and opposite reaction.

There are consequences for everything we do and don't do. That's kind of how this whole living thing works, right? So, when you step out to a functional freeze, something happens. And we're going to talk about what those some things are, so that you can be prepared. So that you could know what's coming.

It is a thing I definitely do with my students in Anchored, my six-month program, and in the Somatic Studio, my three-month program. Note, because I've also been getting questions about this, both are going to be available in the new year. So, keep your eyes out if you're like, "Oh, I really want to work with her. I've been really looking forward to it, but she hasn't offered anything in months and months."

Spoiler alert, I've been writing that book. It's an awful lot of work. It's so fun, and makes me want to pull my hair out some days. But also, so much fun. Anchored and the Somatic Studio will be available again in the new year. So, yay, can't wait to have you join me. You can learn more on my website VictoriaAlbina.com.

So, it has been a few weeks, like three or four, since that miniseries. As a reminder, functional freeze, or somatic self-disconnection, is this tricky state where your nervous system is doing a complex and funky balancing act.

Both pushing the gas and hitting the brakes at the same time, in a tug-of-war between being super alert... that's your sympathetic nervous system pushing the gas... and shutting down in the dorsal vagal response, hitting the brakes, within your own nervous system.

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It is that super fun feeling, facetiously super fun feeling, of being ramped up and anxious about getting everything just right, in a constant state of high alert. While also, feeling totally numb and just disconnected from what you really want. How to even begin to voice it or, I don't know, just make any decision, or motivate, or just I don't know. "But I'm sure if I make a decision, I'll get it wrong. I'm not really here, but I'm really anxious about 'am I here?' And what do people think of me while I'm here, but not here?"

That's functional freeze. I call it somatic self-disconnection because you're profoundly disconnected from your soma, from your body, from your physical presence, while your nervous system is just bouncing; ping pong, ping pong.

My beauty, if you're new around here, and you're like, "What in the what?" Well, first of all, welcome. I'm so glad you're here. I highly recommend that you pause this episode and catch up on those last few episodes for the full picture on what the heck I'm talking about, before listening to this show.

Because if you don't know the Polyvagal Theory and nervous system words, then it's actually not going to be useful for you, and I can imagine it would be wicked frustrating. So, why? I mean, unless you're like, "What I really want today is to be confused and frustrated," and then by all means, proceed. You are a grown up and I shan't be codependent with you. I honor your autonomy, your capacity to decide to frustrate yourself.

Okay, my beauty. So, this mixed state, this low-level buzz of stress and numbness, it can be pretty baffling, right? Because those things should be opposites. They shouldn't be happening at the same time. So, it behooves us to un baffled it.

Our bodies go into dorsal vagal shutdown, or freeze mode, as a defensive strategy when we have either used up all of our sympathetic fight-or-flight

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energy, when all the adrenaline or norepinephrine, all the cortisol, is all warmed up and our adrenal glands can't keep up.

We talked about adrenal fatigue... Which, the first thing we do is break down that term. But we talked about that way back in the day, in Episode 7. So, we've used up all our go-juice.

Or if fight or flight isn't an option, in whatever setting of distress or trauma, then freezing up and shutting us down is our body's way of protecting us. This dorsal response is driven by our nervous system's ability to gauge safety and internal states through interoception, neuroception, and some other sections; which is no wings. But those two, intero- and neuroception, are the most relevant and important here.

While anyone at any age can find themselves in the functional freeze experience, it is particularly common in children responding to stressful environments. Especially those involving attachment figures, caregivers, the people who are supposed to be taking care of us and keeping us safe.

When they're not attuning to us or not keeping us safe emotionally, physically, energetically, spiritually in all of the ways, in any of the ways. Or when they themselves are living with narcissism or narcissistic traits, when they are emotionally immature... We talked all about that in Episode 167 "Emotionally Immature Parents" Oof, that one's a doozy, let me tell you what.

When that's the norm, our little nervous systems don't really know what the "what" is. Particularly, I'll say, with the last one. Emotionally immature parents, they will often sort of go through the motions of parenting but also letting us know just how much they suffered for us, how much our care is a burden, how hard it is to take care of us, how they probably didn't even want us in the first place, right?

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Because they may be in a 35- or 45-year-old body, but they're emotionally like 8 or 12 or 16. There's this instability, right? All families living in an emotional outsourcing framework, and again, if you're new, "emotional outsourcing" is our umbrella term for codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing habits. It all comes with instability, right?

And so, it makes a lot of sense that we go into high alert. "What is happening? What's going to happen? There's no stable ground here." While also going into this hyper-vigilant shutdown. "We're expecting the world to attack us at any point," because it often has. And so, we shut down our connection to self. We hide ourselves.

That can drag on for a lifetime, until we learn what it is. Which, for many of us, happened in Episode 246. We learn how to shift it, which we talked about in Episode 240.

So, today, we are going to talk about the things to be thoughtful about when navigating the thaw, and what to watch out for as you emerge from functional freeze. I'm sharing these common experiences because it is so easy to panic when things change, to shut down when things are unexpected. Especially when we've been feeling the old way, navigating life the old way, and relating the old way, for the last 20, 30, 80 years.

What helps me as I do this nervous system grounding, shifting, changing, healing work, is to remember that it's natural, normal, expectable to have all of these experiences we are going to go through, and many more. This would be a 20-majillion hour show if I listed, legit, everything that could happen.

You'll have some experiences and I won't have listed them. And maybe they'll be subcategories of the categories I gave, that could be possible too. But my point is, when I have some idea of what's possibly coming it helps me not to freak out. So, let's get to it.

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One: Emotional intensity. As you start to thaw your functional freeze, expect a range of emotions to surface, sometimes unpredictably. You may feel sudden bursts of anger or unexpected moments of joy. You know what it's like? It's like your emotional palate is waking up after a long sleep.

I remember in primary care, when I would counsel patients to quit smoking, and they'd come in having quit for three months, six months, a year, and they'd be like, "Whoa, do you know that food is delicious?" And I'd be like, "Yeah, I don't smoke." They're like, "Well, yeah, now that I don't, my palate has woken up." So, that's what happens with your emotions; they're not just french fries.

This phase requires patience and understanding that these emotional waves are part of healing. They can be annoying, but I promise you, they're good thing.

I remember running the gamut of emotions and feelings as I thought... and it was super helpful to know how to do thought work, which I teach in about 473 different podcast episodes. So, look at all my offerings on VictoriaAlbina.com/podcast. Use the search focus there, if you're like, "Wait, what is thought work?"

But I use thought work to choose a new thought, ahead of time, for the moments when it felt like my nervous system was taking over my feelings, because it was. And I wanted to be prepared instead of sideswiped by myself. So, the go-to thought that I chose was, "I might not like this emotion in this moment, and that's okay. It's important to my growth that I let it exist within me and move through me." The caveat here is, as long as it is safe to do so.

So, if I was driving a car and massive rage came over me, that's when I would, instead of staying with it and being with it and giving it space to move through... That's how we heal the nervous system. It's the premise of

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the work I do in Somatic Experiencing. It's what we do in Anchored and the Somatic Studio. We let our feelings move through us. We hold space for that.

But sometimes we're driving a car or sometimes we're at LAX or we are, I don't know, holding a baby. It is unsafe and unwise to let the rage monster take over. That's when we remind ourselves, "I might not like this emotion, and that's okay. It's important to my growth, and I'm going to calm it now." Okay?

So, either I let it exist and move through me, when that is safe, or if not, I calm it. And otherwise say, "It's okay for this emotion, this feeling, this sensation, this experience, to be annoying. I am not going to fight it." Because it is when we fight our emotions that they become what feels like a problem, right?

It is through acceptance and presence that our bodies recalibrate, rebalance. Our bodies know what to do with our feels. And again, unless there is a safety reason why it's suboptimal to feel the entirety of your feel in that moment, giving yourself the grace to be with it is a wild gift. This harks back to Episode 102 "What if It's Not a Problem?"

It's a great question to ask. It's a super useful framework to have ready for these big emotional moments that we should be prepared for. Also, I highly recommend that you talk not just with yourself but with your people, while you're at it. Let them know to expect big emotions for a period of time, while your body experiences big happy, big sad, big angry, rage, frustration, disappointment, whatever.

And maybe, for the first time since you were a little kid, in a really real way, right? For the first time since you realized that it was in your best interest to shut your heart and your feelings down to protect your tenderoni underbelly. Let the people around you know, while you're chill, that

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whatever might come up is not actually about them, and invite them not to take it personally. Which, of course, you can't control.

And it really can do wonders to let your people know that it's not about them if you have big emotions, before you're having them. Have a plan to let your people know what's up, like a safe word of sorts. Maybe you say, "My love, I'm fine. I'm like a cute, lethal handgun. I wasn't expecting it, and all of a sudden, boom, thaw. I'm going to go sob in the bathroom. I'll be out when I'm able."

Or you can cocreate a support plan. "My love, if I tell you I'm feeling a thawing feeling coming on, could you hold me or listen to me or remind me to go out for a run?" You all sort it out. What it's going to look like, what you're going to need, is going to be wildly different for everyone. It was different for me, and it was an evolving thing for me too.

But the advice is this: Do your best to sort out ahead of, not while you're sobbing on the ground feeling desperation, while also feeling angrier and angrier. Okay? Relationship advice, but like, for real. Sort it out ahead of time.

Part B of this is inspired by the philosopher Mr. Michael J. Scott. Who often recorded videos for his future self, with the help of his assistant team of Dwight and Kelly, to remind future him to stay chill regardless of the outcome. I highly recommend that you do exactly that. Record a little video, or even just an audio, or write yourself a letter, to remind future you that past you expected you to have all these big feelings.

If there's someone you love and trust that you can share it with, and you can ask them if they're available and willing to hand it to you if you don't remember in the moment that you wrote yourself this missive, do that. Just remind yourself that nothing, in fact, has gone wrong. Nothing at all. You're just having big feelings.

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Two: Physical sensations. Your body is likely to react in ways you're not used to. This can include physical manifestations like wee little tremors, or shakiness, a rapid heartbeat, hypersensitivity to touch or sound. And of course, at the end of the day, I'm a nurse practitioner, and this is not medical advice.

Wee tremors are like a shakiness and a rapid heartbeat. Those are transient symptoms. So, if these things come and you're able to take some breathing, journal, draw, go for a walk... but you're facing the sun..., or talk to a beloved, and it passes? Then those are likely the physical sensations of coming out of functional freeze.

If you have a seizure, a for real tremor, for real racing heart, get to care please. Please, my love. Meanwhile, these two less acute or grave sort of symptoms... They're not even symptoms. Let's not even call it that. Sorry, that was just my 'provider' mouth... These nervous system experiences like, "Oh, I feel just a little shakiness. Oh, my heart's going kind of fast. Oh, I'm feeling sensitive," that can be your body's way of releasing and processing emotions that had been locked away.

Gentle, mindful exercises, once again, like breathing into the places where these sensations come from and live, can help allow the sensations to find a safe home within you. Or to move through you in a supportive way, instead of staying stuck like they once were.

Body awareness practices like yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, and gentle stretching, can help you to connect with your body, and to practice holding space to be with physical sensation.

Deep breathing exercises can help to calm the nervous system when you experience that little racing heart, that little anxious racing. Remember, deep breath in and long slow out, longer than your "in," is what you want to calm your autonomic nervous system.

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Three: Assertiveness and boundaries. As you emerge from freeze, you may find yourself more and more capable, willing, able, to express your opinions. You're likely to start to feel the edges of your own limits in a way you've maybe never felt before. And may find more ease to begin to set and hold boundaries. A skill we talked about in Episodes 5, 41, and it's sprinkled in a dozen others.

This newfound assertiveness is healthy. It's a beautiful thing. Remember, boundaries are resentment prevention. They are a gift to you and the people in your life. And, they're likely to feel unfamiliar. It's important to practice expressing yourself in safer, more nourishing environments first, building confidence in your voice.

You know I'm not kidding at all when I recommend you start with your pets, and then your BFF, and then work outward from there. Right? Practicing with a coach, a therapist, or someone you're in community. Practicing challenging conversations with gentle souls can help build confidence in setting boundaries in places where you're more likely to get some pushback.

And, it could really benefit from working on your neuroplasticity; strengthening the neural groove in your mind that says, "When I have a limit, when I know my boundary, it is my birthright to state it." Because remember, when we are setting boundaries in this family, are we controlling others? You know we're not. We're not guiltting them. We're not shaming them.

We are talking about what *we* are going to do. What you are going to do for *you*, and you're not asking anyone to do anything else. You're simply letting them know how you are going to take care of you.

So, you're in a conversation with a partner and they start to raise their voice, and you say, "My love, I understand you're getting activated in your

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nervous system. If you continue to raise your volume, or use that tone with me, I'm going to walk away from this conversation.”

So, that other person? They're welcome to scream. Do it. Go for it. Have a blast. I'm not sticking around for it. I have been screamed at plenty in my life, I'm no longer available for it. I would 100% walk away now. I also don't put myself in relationships or moments where someone would scream at me. A couple of different kinds of expansion there, as we thaw, right?

But my point is this, remember that boundaries are about you taking care of *you*. Practice setting and holding them with the people who will say, “Oh, that's awesome. Thank you for sharing that with me.” And work on up to doing it with people who might tell you where to shove your boundary, you know what I mean?

Four: Relationships may shift. Speaking of those people may tell you where to stick your boundary. With your evolving self-awareness and assertiveness your relationships are likely to change. Some people might not understand or appreciate the new you. Like I always say, “When we stop people pleasing, people stop being pleased.”

The people who gained something from you being a pushover or not having those boundaries and limits, from you people-pleasing them and displeasing you, they're not likely to like all this thought induced self-love and care. Especially if it means you stop doing things for them that they can very well do for themselves.

While this can be challenging, it also opens the door to more authentic and fulfilling connections with the people who are stoked that you're not people pleasing them anymore, and that you're taking, for reals, care of you. It allows you to start to see, in Technicolor, just who doesn't like you living a fulfilling and less codependent life.

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Then, I want to invite you to really tune in to who is loving you living your life for you in this new way? Who is applauding you and throwing you parades? And, who is annoyed by it? Who doesn't like it, when you say "I'm going to meditate. I'm going to go to Anchored. I'm going to go listen to *Feminist Wellness*. I'm going to go for a walk. I'm going to take care of me. I'm going to make food at home when you get whatever take out?" Who doesn't like it when you take care of you?

Take stock for a hot minute, and then ask yourself: Do those people who don't like how I am when I'm caring for me get to have me? Have they earned you? Because you're fabulous. You're amazing. You're incredible. And if they can't love you and show up for you and support you when you are taking care of you... If they can't be in reciprocity, do those people get to have you?

Listen, you know I've never been one of those people who's like, "Just cut people out of your life," willy nilly, right? You've never heard me use the word "toxic" people. I'm not here for that. You might be like, "You know what? I don't love the way they react to me taking care of myself, but I love them for X-Y reasons, and so yeah, I'm going to keep them in my life."

This may be the first time you're even asking yourself, you're even questioning, whether these people get to stay in your life. So, question. Just get curious. Ask yourself the question, because they might get to keep you and they might not. It's all up to you.

The point I'm making is this, listen to your intuition and your discernment. Let them be your guide, and not obligation, not has-to, not 'they're going to be upset if I...' We talked all about our intuition, how to differentiate it from trauma responses, in Episode 200 and 201.

Part B of this one, is that people who are stuck in functional freeze are often displeased with or intimidated by people who aren't. Or who were,

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and have done the work to thaw. Because what you're doing is you're holding up a mirror and saying, "My love, look, you can liberate yourself too. I did it. You can live in a more authentic and real way. I'm doing it. It's not easy, but it's so beautiful, expansive, and worth it. You can join me."

People who feel stuck in their nervous systems, who don't have regulatory skills, whose window of capacity and tolerance in their nervous system is very, very small, who are stuck in codependent habits like living from obligation, martyring themselves, giving their lives over to others, giving others advice instead of making change in their own lives, buffering, feeling like victims or like everyone is against them, they won't like you releasing those scripts they're living by.

They'll feel challenged by you living into your big, beautiful truth from your open heart. Know that they're likely the ones who are going to come at you the hardest. Saying things like, "Well, all you do is focus on you. You don't give enough to your family. You're so selfish." When what you're doing, is simply allowing the pendulum of self-abandonment; Episodes 163 and 164; to swing back towards balance, self-care, and community care.

It will likely feel like a massive affront to them, because you're lifting a mirror. They will feel challenged, criticized, put off. So, be ready for the potential character assassination, because that is the only tool in many people's codependent emotional outsourcing tool belt. Their attacks have nothing to do with you, my love. Check your values. Check your ethics. Make sure that you are in line with what feels good and true and honest for you, and breathe through everything else.

Five: Sensitivity to stress. Talk about needing to breathe through it. While in some ways you may have more bandwidth for dealing with life, as the window of capacity or tolerance in your nervous system grows and widens, you may also find yourself more easily stressed or overwhelmed in a different way.

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Usually, it's one of two ways, or kind of both. First, is that you may become more sensitive in your standards, and what you're willing to allow into your life and world. That means, that things you previously brushed off could now trigger a stronger reaction in your nervous system, and can activate your sense of dignity to say, "Absolutely not. I'm not having this."

The second, is a sensitivity on a really physical level. So, hearing things more. You could have more misophonia... A disgust with the sound of people, eating. I have had that since I was a wee girl. It's really common in folks with ADHD. What's up ADHD superstars? But yeah, that can definitely get worse.

Though, actually, you what's interesting? It's actually gotten better for me as my nervous system has thawed. I think that's because it was a thing that I would... At home, growing up, I would say to my dad, "Please stop slurping. Please stop making so much noise. It's causing a physical..." It was really dysregulating for me. I was effectively told to buck up.

And so, I'm realizing this as I'm talking to you about it. As I have learned to regulate my nervous system more, and as I'm able to not take it personally, to tell the story, "Oh, they're making noise," to not bother me... Which is totally the story that I told in childhood.

Because I was told, "I hear you, that this really bothers you, but I will not stop. I don't care it's so upsetting for you," and so, I took it really personally. I mean, I was also a kid, right? So, that's interesting.

As I have thawed, I have taken it less personally. It's not about me, I've made it not about me. And I have more capacity in my nervous system for it to not be about me. And so, it's less bothersome. Very interesting. Thanks for staying with me while I actively thought-worked that out loud in the moment.

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But we can become way more sensitive to other things. Like, if you live near a highway, you might hear it more. If there's an old Chihuahua sleeping at your feet... right, Ziggy Stardog?... and he makes a lot of little snoring noises, you may be more and more sensitive to them. The texture of your clothing, the feeling of your hair brushing; a majillion thing. I'll just stop myself because my brain wants to give a thousand examples.

But you may become more sensitive to the world around you. And then, I'll add this... Sensitivity to stress. Right? And so, stress can overwhelm you in a really different feeling way, because you're not shutting down to it and you're not overreacting to it.

So, as you equilibrate and learn a balance, the middle path... What is the middle path? You know me and my Buddhism-lite. What is the middle path for you and your nervous system, in terms of responsiveness? As you figure out what a response to life is instead of reacting or shutting down?

It's going to feel weird. It's going to feel weird. You're likely to be, "Um, I don't know," that's normal. That's fine. It might not feel fine, it might feel like poop. Okay, fine. But it will pass. I guess that's what I'm saying. It will pass. Mindfulness, relaxation techniques, these things can be really, really, really helpful in managing this increased sensitivity.

Now, in the moment of feeling all off your game, mindfulness and relaxation techniques are unlikely to help you in the moment. So, once again, we do these things ahead of time so that when the challenging moment comes, we're prepped and ready.

The other thing I will share, that I hope really helps, is that your sensitivity is a massive gift. It is one of the greatest gifts of this lifetime, to be a sensitive animal. I recommend, once more, learning how to hear it, to distinguish it from the voice of trauma, and to hear what you hear from that sensitivity.

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When you know it's your intuition and your sensitivity, and not trauma, it is a gift, gift, gift.

Yeah, it can be super rough to start hearing every little sound, so buy the earplugs and the headphones and remind yourself, it's not a problem, it's okay to be annoyed by it, at first, and whenever. But it's not a problem to be sensitive. Okay? It's a both/and, with the annoyance.

Part B of this, I want to remind you that if you head over to my website, VictoriaAlbina.com, there's a big toolbar at the top of the screen. It says something like 'Give me my free meditation.' If you click it, you can download a whole suite of meditations, nervous system exercises, inner child exercises. They're free, they can be supportive, why not?

C, of supporting your body in stress, is a reminder that studies show that movement and physical activity, however you define it, is a significant and evidence-based tool to help reduce stress and improve mood. So, small things like incorporating a 10-minute walk within an hour of waking up is really great and helpful for your circadian rhythm, for your sleep, for your stress management, and to support your thawing nervous system.

It's a great thing to do for those of us who are able to walk. And if you have two legs and are able to walk that is such a great gift. I want to invite you to take a moment of gratitude for it.

Six: Discovering your true self. Thawing is such an exciting time for self-discovery. I smile the whole time I'm doing this show because I love you so much. But can you hear it? I'm just thinking about how exciting it was to really get to know myself.

As we thaw, we often both remember who we really are, under the false emotional outsourcing selves we stepped into to survive. We can really get to know some new preferences, interests, dislikes. It's a beautiful, amazing,

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and potentially super joyful journey of reconnecting with yourself, and understanding your true wants and needs.

I want to really encourage you to embrace this exploration with curiosity and openness, and to maximize the happiness. Expose yourself to new things to see what feels good for you; new music, foods, fabric, flowers, people. Start to open your horizons just to see what new horizons feel like in a body that is coming back to life. It's very exciting.

But you know what? You're likely to find out what also doesn't work for you. Listen, if you've ever met me, I never did cocaine because I am cocaine; that's always my joke. But caffeine? Oh, coffee does not work for this sweet little nervous system. But I drank it all the time because I was in a functional freeze. I was so shut down but so hyper, and so I needed to drive the hyper. But also, I was so shut down to how lousy the coffee made me feel.

So, I figured that out as I thawed from functional freeze. I drank tons of coffee until not very long ago. It's pretty wild to think back on it. So, you get to figure out exciting new things, and figure out that coffee actually feels like crap in your body. Or you actually don't like strawberry jam, you've just been eating it every day because, I don't know, you just do. Or you just did. Eh? See how we shifted that one? I personally love strawberry jam.

Seven: Need for safe spaces. As you navigate these changes, having a safer, comforting space can be so supportive. Now, I want to say, it's crucial. And I want to honor that having a physical place where you feel secure may be challenging for many of us, right?

Many of us live with families, we work in offices, we travel to work on buses or subways so we don't even have in the car. A physical place where you feel secure is something that I do believe most of us can sort of carve out.

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I had a spot in Prospect Park, in Brooklyn, that was, oh, God, this one tree. I love every tree, but there was this one, and she was just my complete home girl. She was where I would go when home was not a safe place and work was a stressful place. I would go to her to feel safer, supported, and cared for.

Practices like meditation can provide mental peace. And tools like nervous system resourcing, Episode 135, can support us in feeling safer, no matter what's going on around us. These refuges are vital for processing and adapting to your evolving self. Making yourself a physical or energetic cocoon for your process is a beautiful way to support yourself as you become mush before you butterfly your way back into the world.

Eight: Managing reactivity. This is similar to some of the previous notes, and it deserves its own space. Increased reactivity is common as your fight-or-flight responses become more active. Please, do not let this one catch you unaware.

What I mean here is, often anger; sacred, important, vital anger. Which is something we love, love, love around here. It's something we actively practice feeling in Anchored and the Somatic Studio. Frustration, anger, irritability, all the like... You know what it is? It's the emotions that humans socialized as women are quite often taught not to feel. These are the ones that come up and out when we thaw; super common.

Oh, and if you're like, "Wait, what's sacred anger? What's healthy anger? I was taught to fear anger. I was taught not to feel anger. I don't let myself feel anger." Episodes 206, 207, 208, those are for you. Yeah? Beautiful.

If you haven't heard them in a while... Actually, I kind of recommend everyone go listen to those after this one. Because if you've lived in functional freeze, it's highly likely that your sacred anger is going to come up as you thaw. So, prepare yourself, my darling.

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Recognizing the signs of reactivity and having strategies to manage them, like deep breathing, stepping away from a situation, a safe word with your family members, can help maintain balance and can keep you out of jail or divorce court, or ending up in one of those “Karen” videos. I'm kidding. But you know I'm not actually kidding, right?

Your nervous system kept you in a kind of tamped down, less reactive kind of fight-or-flight sympathetic activation. The kind where you are simmering, but rarely boiled. Anxious and worried, but not explosive. Generally speaking, but of course, with some exceptions. Mostly, in my experience, due to self-abandonment cycle moments.

Same-same with dorsal. You stayed numb, but not collapsed. So, this is the “functional part” of functional freeze. You weren't in panic, you weren't lashing out, and you weren't collapsed, you would have been functional, right?

In functional freeze you're ping ponging; you're getting degrees, you're getting raises, you're having a family; you're doing life. Which means you're not feeling the extremes of those nervous system states, and you're likely to feel the extremes as you thaw.

So, as you thaw, be prepared for spikes of reactivity as your nervous system remembers that it's possible to be safe, and allowing you to have the big, big feelings. Again, have a plan with and for yourself. Make the Michael Scott video. Let your people know how they can support you, can help you coregulate, if they're available adults.

Please, do not ask your children to coregulate you, it's not their job. You can go hold your baby or hold your toddler and snuggle them, but asking a kid to step into that role? Not the cutest move. But have your people ready, so they don't think you're for reals losing it on them. Forewarning can bring compassion here that can be really helpful in the moment.

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I also highly recommend, and I'm being earnest here, make an anger playlist now. Make a big sadness, make a big joy, make a set of big feels playlists now, so that you can support yourself when you need it, and can go wherever you go for three minutes alone. The loo is a great choice. A shower is a great choice. Walking the dog, great choice. Shake it out, dance it out, be with your big feels instead of unleashing them on someone or yourself, or choking them back down again. Okay?

Nine: Importance of support. I know I've said it a majillion times, and here it is again, healing is a collective process. Healing is a collective process. There's no independent healing. There's only interdependent healing, coregulatory healing.

And sometimes, like in resourcing, we're coregulating with Pachamama, with Mother Nature, with crystals, with the sun, with the stars, with our pets, with squirrels, with trees outside our window, with Dr. Maya Angelou, with Audrey Lorde, with an abuelita, with someone we've never met, someone we once loved, someone who's here, someone who's not.

Resourcing is an act of interdependence. All healing is interdependent. All of life is interdependent. This is a whole other podcast, and this is a whole big thing in my book, But I'll drop this crumb right here, I don't believe that there is self-regulation. All regulation is coregulation.

So, support from others is invaluable during this time, as always. Friends, families, professionals like coaches and therapists, can provide guidance, understanding, validation, support, and regulation.

I know it can be challenging, and I really want to encourage you to reach out and share your experiences, and ask for support from trusted folks. I will remind you to be thoughtful about who you share with in this tender time. Celebrate small victories. My darlings, we must celebrate every single

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kitten step towards change. Acknowledging and celebrating each little step is crucial.

These victories, no matter how small, represents significant progress on your journey. They reinforce your resilience and the positive changes you're making. Help your nervous system see that what you're doing is safe. And that it's okay to expand your window of capacity, dignity, and tolerance towards more self-awareness and self-expression. What beautiful things. Celebrate them.

Oh, I love a "Victories" journal. They can be cheap. It can be a 99-cent little book from the bodega. Don't make this complicated; make it affordable, make it accessible. If you're more likely to use it if it's some fancy thing, do that. I don't care. The point is, get it. Celebrate you.

Get on a thread with a bunch of friends who are also thawing. I got a... A couple of weeks back, from a woman just outside of London who had a *Feminist Wellness* listening group. She got together with people across the world. They met in some kind of online forum about codependent thinking; she called it "codependency," that's cool.

They had a listening group where they would listen to the show and discuss it, talk about it, see what they learned, and trade notes. I thought that was so amazing and so cool. I think it's incredible. I want to give her a shout-out, her team, her family, her little familia, she's created around the *Feminist Wellness* show, and I want to encourage them.

Share your victories with each other as you thaw. Create a listening group with your friends, like a book club. But it's actually way easier because then you don't have to read the whole book, right? You can put me on 2X speed.

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My love, get support. You deserve to be held. You deserve to be loved. I see you on your journey. I'm sending you so much love and care. You're doing a beautiful job.

Please remember, moving out of functional freeze is a path. It's a journey of rediscovering healing. It's a phase that can be filled with challenges but also immense, powerful, beautiful growth. Be kind to yourself during this journey.

You're not broken. You're simply finding your way back to a deeper, more connected, more grounded you. You're a tender ravioli, please treat yourself like one. Thanks for listening, my love. It has been a pleasure, as always.

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.

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.