

Ep #263: The Role of Platonic Love in Our Wellness with My Friends Suneye, Jules, and Juana



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. This week on the *Feminist Wellness* podcast, we are continuing our conversation all about love. It's February and I thought, why not?

So, we've talked to Lily about dating. With Danielle we were going to talk about sex, but we ended up talking about love and trust and relating; beautiful conversation. Last week, I introduced you all to my wife, Billey, and we talked about like 4,000 things.

This week, I'm introducing you to several of my closest friends, and we are talking about the importance of friendship, of platonic love, of having humans in your life who say 'I love you,' who show up for you, who accept you, cherish you, adore you.

My beauty, my angel, I deeply believe that your circle, the people you actively choose to keep around you in your orbit, should be a source of encouragement, positivity, and a place to vent the negativity. Though, as soon as I said that dichotomy, I'm not even into it. But I think you know what I mean, right?

Your circle should be the people who lift you up, who raise you up, and who hold space when things really, genuinely, feel like garbage. So that you can process it. So that you can move through it. So that you can be present for the realness, with a witness of someone who loves you and who has your back.

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Our reenactment wounds, our inner child wounding, our attachment stuff, it doesn't come up in the same way with friends as it does in romantic settings. It's just how brains and psyches, our nervous systems, work.

And so, our friends are a beautiful place to practice the ways we want to relate when we're in a romantic setting, so that we can bring all of those best skills to bear in dating, when dating is a thing that feels challenging, or being in a romantic relationship, as it often does for those of us who are living in emotional outsourcing.

And you might be like, "Oh girl, I'm fine," but friendship, it is a wild gift, and I deeply believe our friends should support us to become the best version of ourselves possible. Our favorite people should support us in becoming our favorite.

So, I want to invite you to really consider who you're keeping in your friend circle, and why. This comes up in Anchored all the time. People share, "I am running with this crew I always ran with in the past, and they drink a ton and I'm really not into it. But I don't know how to step away." Challenging, right?

Those kinds of things come up a lot. What I want to remind you of, is that you deserve love and respect, and settling for anything less is a choice that you don't have to keep making. I phrase it that way, and very specifically, because given what we came from, given our nervous system settings age 0-7... which is when our nervous system gets its initial operating system from our environment as children...

Putting up with, tolerating, accepting b.s., not being treated well, not being made important, feeling like a burden, feeling like a bother, feeling like an 'also ran'... whatever your story is, that might have been all that your nervous system had the capacity for in your teens 20s, 30s, 40s, whenever you are.

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What I want to say is this, you can shift. You can change. You can grow. You can shift the capacity within your nervous system to be with good, to be with love, to be with care, to receive. Danielle and I talked about that, that receiving was so challenging for me for so long. And doing the somatic work, Somatic Experiencing sensory motor work, doing the work I now share with clients through Anchored, made all the difference.

It really helped me to be able to open my heart, to live from my full, open heart, so that I could not just give and give and give and give and give but could also receive love and care.

And so, this week we're going to be doing little vignettes. These very short conversations with several of my nearest and dearest, my closest, my real "ride or die", and I can't wait. I can't wait to share these conversations with you.

They said very nice things about me that I wasn't expecting. I thought we were just going to talk about friendship en général. With that said, man, we just say 'I love you' like 1,000 times a day. It's just so magical.

I want that for you. I want you to be surrounded not by dozens of adoring fans... I mean, have that if you want, but I'm not into that. Suneye and I talked about this; you'll hear it in a minute. But I just need a small crew of really dedicated "ride or die." I've built that over the last 20+ years and I could not be happier. And I want it so much for you.

It's part of the package deal in Anchored. You step into Anchored and you're introduced to these 20+ incredible humans, these amazing women who are so excited to meet you, to get to know you, and to be your friend. So, without further ado, here are my best friends. Thanks for listening.

Victoria Albina: Hello, Dr. Suneye Koohsari.

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Dr. Suneye Koohsari: Hello, Victoria Albina.

Victoria: Hi, how are you?

Suneye: I'm great. Nice to see you.

Victoria: You are so great. It's so nice to see you, too. Thanks for coming on my show.

Suneye: Thanks for having me.

Victoria: Yeah, I'm very, very excited. My little cheeks hurt with happiness already. So, I asked you on the show because we're talking all about platonic love, friend love, and the importance of non-romantic relationships for filling our hearts. I love you so much. I think it's our 10-year anniversary pretty soon.

Suneye: Nine, going on 10.

Victoria: Nine going on 10. Okay, great. Well, close enough. Close enough.

Suneye: We're going to have big bash for our tenth. So, I think it's really important to know.

Victoria: I think we should have a really big bash. What should we do?

Suneye: Definitely dumplings.

Victoria: Oh, we love dumplings.

Suneye: We do love dumplings.

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Victoria: We love dumplings, but we also love Levain cookies.

Suneye: We do. A dumpling-cookie-themed extravaganza.

Victoria: Okay, great. I'm into it. My pancreas might think differently.

Suneye: We'll deal with that after.

Victoria: Who needs a pancreas? That's fine. So, you told me there's a story you wanted to share on this theme.

Suneye: Yeah, I wanted to share my experience of meeting you. Because I think it really encapsulates what platonic love means for me. So, I moved to New York City from Toronto, Canada, and it was about a year after finishing residency. And, you know, residency isn't known for being like the most cozy environment.

So, I moved to New York City, and it was this whole new environment for me, and Victoria and I met at work. She worked in the office right next to me, and she burst into my office with all this warmth and energy and super funny, and this cool person from Brooklyn. And honestly, I was like, "This for real? Is she testing me? Is this the beginning of some kind of hazing thing? Is she about to steal my chair."

I'm still in this residency vibe of like, "I don't know what's about to happen." But it didn't stop. Then, we were sneaking out during lunch to go hit the sales racks. It was just so amazing to be hit by so much unconditional love and acceptance, with really no strings attached.

That's what platonic love means for me. There really isn't much compromise there. It's just, you are who you are. I am who I am. I'm an introverted introvert and you are not.

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Victoria: I'm an Argentine.

Suneye: Yes, and we just get along. You don't ask me to be anything else, and I don't ask you to do anything else. And you've just made my life so much richer. You've made New York my home. That's one of the reasons I ended up staying, even though I was only supposed to stay here for three months.

I think as an introvert, that's what I've always looked for. Right? Those type of friendships are so important for me. People who accept me for who I am, and there aren't really any negotiations. You just see each other for who you are. You're there for each other. You're good people. You're good humans. Yeah, you just brighten each other's lives. And that's what it means for me.

Victoria: Hmm, thank you for sharing that story. The feeling is so fully mutual. I remember that day, of bouncing into your office like full Tigger from Winnie the Pooh, and just being like, "Honey!" I remember you looking a little shell shocked. You were like, "What is this? What just bounced in here?"

It's so funny, because I had Billey on the show yesterday, and we were talking about how we met, and immediately started laughing and telling jokes and taking the piss, and the other one just being like, "Ha-hah, I'm going with you." I feel like that's how it was for us. That's part of how I knew that we had the potential to be BFFs forever; forever's redundant. Because in the BF... So, BF forever.

But yeah, I just started cracking jokes and you start snapping right back. So rye and witty, you are.

Suneye: Thank you. Yes. It's part of the training...

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Victoria: As a Canadian... What do you think it is that sustains friendship over the long haul? Because I hear that a lot, people are like, "It's really hard to make adult friendships. And then, it's super hard to sustain them. We get busy and blah, blah, blah."

Suneye: I think for me, personally, it's I don't really have that many expectations for my friendships. It's really to see each other for who you are, be good people, be good humans, be able to rely on each other. I have friendships where we can honestly go two years without speaking with each other. And then, we can see each other for a weekend and have the most amazing time.

For example, I have a friend who's out in Colorado. We'll do this... life gets chaotic, we don't talk, and then we'll get on the phone and it's like nothing has happened. Or she'll be in town and we'll just spend an amazing day together. And if she calls me today, and is like, "I need you," I am getting on a plane and I'm getting there.

I think that's what it takes is. Yes, everyone's life is totally chaotic, and I understand that. It's okay with me that, when you have that connection, it's okay if I'm not talking to you all the time. It's not like middle school where you need that 10 times a day. Like, "Call me-call me-call me. Text me-text me. Send me a million names."

I know when that love is there it's okay. When that connection is there, I'm going to be there for you. I know that person is going to be there for me. So, as long as I have that trust I'm cool.

Victoria: So my nerds, Dr. Suneye Koohsari, is describing secure attachment. That's what I'm hearing, right? That you're securely attached with your friends. From knowing you for the last nine, going on 10 years, I would believe that that is because you have such a secure attachment to yourself. Which I think is one of the most beautiful things.

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You're you like how I'm 'hello, I'm a banana boat.' Like I am all of the energy. You're just so solidly you, I would imagine that that's what allows you to be so securely attached with us. Am I getting that right?

Suneye: You're the pro.

Victoria: Oh, stop it. Also, for the record, if we went two years without talking to each other I think I would explode and die.

Suneye: Oh, yes. Absolutely. With you, that is not acceptable.

Victoria: Okay, unacceptable.

Suneye: Also, you might be lost in the woods upstate somewhere, so I'd be very worried.

Victoria: Thank you. You are a grounding compass for me, I must say. I like that we do, effectively, wellness checks. Where you're like, "Knock-knock, are you alive? Are you okay? Did you die of complete boredom and loneliness upstate? What's going on? Are you alive? Are you okay?" And I'm like, "I'm getting through."

Remember when we went to the Statue of Liberty?

Suneye: Oh, yes, that was amazing.

Victoria: Okay, that's the kind of thing for me, that when my inner children can just be fully free to just be their kid selves without any limitations, that's one of the most important beautiful gifts. We were running around like silly geese.

Suneye: We were riding boats.

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Victoria: It was so much fun. I definitely cried at Ellis Island. Did you?

Suneye: I felt it here.

Victoria: Okay, you felt it deep in your heart.

Suneye: I felt that deep in my heart.

Victoria: I appreciate that. Yeah, next time we have to go to the tuberculosis hospital. Doc, anything else you want to make sure the good people know when they're thinking about friendships?

Suneye: I think friendships really are what sustains us. Something to share about me is, I, myself, am an immigrant. And I think without knowing the words "chosen family" it's what I've looked for since I was a child. For people who had similar life experiences as me.

Since I was a kid, those friendships, people who really understood my lived experience, and who you didn't have to explain what you were going through, who just saw you for who you are, that's really, I think, what has helped me thrive over the course of my life, in a way that my family didn't understand.

In a way that I, myself, might have not even understood what I was going through. Just by seeing how my friends were just living their lives and interacting with the world. If I was taking something personally, they were like, "Yeah, no big deal." I don't take it for granted.

I used to say to look for those people, look for the helpers, look for the people who love you for you, and surround yourself with those type of people. And it doesn't have to be huge, right? It's not a popularity contest. For me, it's always been a small core group of people. That's why I love you, and I love my friends. I cherish all these relationships, and I value you.

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Victoria: Thank you. I value you, too. I really cherish everything that you bring to my life. And thank you for naming “chosen family” out loud. It's such an important concept, and the more we can treat our friends like our most beloved family, they can enrich our lives.

I mean, you said it so beautifully. I don't even know I'm trying to sum it up. You said it perfectly. So, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, eldest immigrant daughter. Oof, we've seen each other through some family shenanigans.

I just listed out like 27 banana things each of our parents have done over this last 9, 10 years. What are you going to do? Because it is a really unique experience. I mean, you're also a double immigrant. You have [crosstalk] and Canada. Triple, right, sure. So, anything else to add? I feel like you've said so much. It's so helpful for so many people.

Suneye: I'm just excited for our dumpling-cookie extravaganza.

Victoria: I'm really excited. Yeah, let's make it wild. Maybe we should go up in the CN Tower, and have cookies and dumplings there.

Suneye: Ooh, now that's an idea.

Victoria: That is an idea. Alright, we'll work it out. We'll let everybody know. We'll post pictures. It'll be a good time. Thank you, Dr. Suneye Koohsari. For the record, y'all, 99% of the time I call her Suneye Koohsari, MD, because she's a woman of color, physician, immigrant, and she deserves her credentials named; like an obnoxious amount. Because she has worked her butt off and she's so smart. That's the other thing, I'm so proud of you.

Suneye: Thank you. And I'm so proud of you for talking about admiration for our friends. Just see you live out your life dreams, and to be able to have

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such reach to help so many people, I'm just in complete awe. To reflect back on nine years ago, when you were talking about what you're talking about now, to individual patients.

And how much impact it had to that one person sitting in an exam room with you to the work that you're doing now, is just so awe inspiring and so wonderful. It just warms my heart. I'm so happy for you. I'm just so excited for everybody who gets to learn from you and to grow, because of everything that they've learned from you.

Victoria: Likewise, you worked your way up in primary care and became this fancy medical director at the primary care group we met at, and now you have your own private practice... I'll link it in the show notes. And you inspire me. I think that's like one of the key things, right? You inspire me, and you're hilarious. Thank you.

Suneye: Thank you. Love you.

Victoria: Love you. Ciao. Hi, Jules.

Jules Netherland, PhD: Hi.

Victoria: Thanks for coming on the show.

Jules: Thanks for having me.

Victoria: Yeah, I would love it if you could introduce yourself to the good people.

Jules: Well, my name is Jules Netherland. I am trained as a medical sociologist. I work at an organization called the Drug Policy Alliance. I live in the South Bronx, and I have the great good fortune of calling you one of my friends.

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Victoria: The feeling is very, very deeply, deeply mutual. And everybody, Jules is being extremely humble. I am very lucky that my friends do incredible work and are wildly inspiring. She is playing this really huge, important role in ending the drug war. And it is incredible work. I'm really grateful that you're doing it. So yeah, you're magical.

I brought you on because I love you... And we tell each other pretty much every day. It's rare that it'll be three days that one of us won't have sent "I love you" in a text or a little voice note, "I love you." Okay, that's mostly me. I love you. Jules and I have matching llama tattoos, which is a really long story, but it's an ode to our never-ending love, and llamas.

So, you and I have talked a lot about the role of platonic love and friendship, in our lives and our wellness, in supporting us. And so, I was hoping you could talk about that.

Jules: My thinking about this has really evolved over the years. I was someone who was very introverted and shy. I've actually gotten very deliberate about building a friendship network as an adult in my 40s, in fact. And I am so glad I did. I think it's one of the best things I've ever done for my health and wellness, and outlook on life. For me, it was finding the right folks.

I always joke that I've made my best friends at silent meditation retreats, and I've actually made a ton of friends at silent meditation retreats. Because what I like are people that are sort of introspective and thoughtful, and willing to look at themselves. So, yeah, now I have this great collection of friends. Not all found at silent meditation retreats, but many of them are.

I love them deeply and dearly. And I spend quite a bit of time trying to foster and nurture those connections. As a queer person, I consider them my chosen family. That's been really kind of beautiful. I think that's one of the great opportunities that we all have, is to surround yourself with the people

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that you love, the people that bring you joy, the people that show up for you, the people that you want to show up for.

I feel like I've built a really wonderful collection of people. And it turns out, for me in particular, but I think for all of us, that became even more critically important when I was diagnosed with cancer, and then had a recurrence and was diagnosed with metastatic terminal cancer. I've got to say, my friends can and do show up for me.

I have something called "The love squad." Which I know you know, because you are on the love squad. Which is a small group of about five or six people that are really tracking and supporting me and loving me through this treatment.

And then, I have this network of 60 or 70 people... I don't know how I ended up with all these connections... that I can tap when I need to go to appointment, or I just feel like crap, or whatever the whatever. And of course, the best thing to do with the friends is just to play. That's some of my thinking about it.

Victoria: I'm thinking about this journey of yours, from self-proclaimed introvert with that smaller friend network, to making this big decision. Like, "Basta. I'm going to spread my wings, grow my friend family." There's always that, "It's so hard to make friends as an adult," and you are evidence you don't have to believe that story.

So, could you share a bit about what that looked like for you, such that you might inspire others? I find you wicked inspiring, as an extroverted, gregarious...

Jules: Yeah, I think, for me it was a combination of things. It was really realizing I wanted more connection. It was believing that I was worthy of that connection. That I was somebody people would want to hang out with

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and get to know. That I was interesting, and could be engaging and connect, right?

And then a lot of it was, honestly, just going outside my comfort zone and putting myself out there. But like I said, for me, what the key was for me, just the way I work, is I really am good at dyads; groups are not my jam. I have a very hard time making connections in groups. To parties and that kind of thing, no. But I joined a queer Sangha, and they do little dyadic conversations, and that I could build from there, right?

Or I took some classes, things that were kind of structured, that put me into connection with people, for me made the difference. Am I allowed to say that I also made a lot of friends dating?

Victoria: I mean, Jules, c'mon, you're allowed to do anything you want. You're a grown up, you silly goose. Let's get you to the pond, you're such a silly goose. Isn't that cute? Anyway, you made a lot of friends dating.

Jules: Yeah. I made a lot of friends dating, which was perfect for me because it's a dyad. Dyads are my jam. I'm like, "Oh, I don't necessarily want to have a romantic relationship with you. But I really want to have a friend relationship with you." And so, I collected some really wonderful, wonderful people that way.

Victoria: I love that. It's interesting that this just popped into my brain, the concept of a "competency crush." We talked about this in Anchored a couple years ago, and no one had heard of it. Which made me wonder if it was a lesbian thing.

But I'm realizing I have such a competency crush on you, on Suneye, who is in this episode, on Juana. My friends are so competent and do such incredible things in the world. My heart feels so explode-y thinking about

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you, and the way you move through the world, and the way you relate to people.

Jules: Thanks, I know what you mean. I actually crushed out on someone, a bartender, the other day because they were so good at their job. I was like, "You're amazing."

Victoria: "You're incredible." I love competency. It doesn't really matter what you're doing, it's not a pretension thing, right? It doesn't have to be some highbrow thing. Like, when a waitress has 12 plates on a tray and doesn't drop them. I can barely cross a room without spilling my drink. And I don't mean booze, I mean water.

Jules: Yeah. I think the other thing that made a difference for me was, I've never been particularly judgmental, but I really find people fascinating and interesting. And I really believe everybody has a competence, has a story, has something to give, has something to contribute, has the ability to enrich my life. And, it's certainly proven true.

And so, I think that sense of curiosity and wonder and interest in people, and then people respond in kind. Mostly what I do with my friends is, I listen and show up, and then it's returned. So, yeah, it's amazing.

Victoria: If you've ever been on a call with me you've seen my "Because Science" mug; Jules gifted me that. So, you can thank her for bringing that to life. I was thinking, as you were talking about friends, amazing, one of the things that's become really clear for me recently is exactly what I don't want in friends. What I don't want in the people I spend time with. Which is not judging them, it's just getting clear for me on my preferences.

A lot of booze, like when all the hangouts circle around alcohol, and cocktails are the focus. I'm not dissing it, I'm not judging it, I'm just not into

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it. How has it been for you to get clarity on what you do and don't want in friendship? What's that look like?

Jules: I mean, I have a very eclectic group of friends, which is kind of fun. And it's really fun when you put them together. But for me, honestly, I know I've said this before, but I'm not good with groups and parties. I don't enjoy them. If, people, that's how they want to hang out, it's just not my jam.

I like having deep conversations with people. I like to be silly, too. I like to be active, so a lot of my friendship stuff is around working out or being outside. That kind of stuff.

Victoria: Or dragging us all into doing a mud run.

Jules: Yeah, mud runs, awesome. Great way to spend time with friends. But what I don't do very well, and again, no judgment, is superficiality. Don't talk to me about pop culture because the conversation will end immediately; I know nothing.

Victoria: I feel like I could talk a lot about 80's pop culture, or like 90's. If you want to talk about *Alf*, *Perfect Strangers*, that can go on for a while. So yeah, I'm with you.

Jules: I actually have a lot of interest in spirituality and religion, and so I really like people that are willing to go there with me. I think it's really understanding what is it you like, how do you like to spend your time, what are the kinds of people you vibe with? And mine are really mixed bag, but I think what they have in common is they're willing to go deep.

Victoria: In friendships you have to be willing to go deep, and to go deep pretty fast. But you also have to be a complete silly goose. I must say I do love b.s. 'how's the weather' small talk with strangers.

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Jules: I know you do, and I cannot small talk to save my life. I am terrible at it. And my partner is amazing at it. I marvel at her capacity to talk to anybody about anything, at any time. I am just not that person.

Victoria: But I love that you surround yourself with big, bold, gregarious femmes, who will talk to anyone at the farmers market, in the pharmacy and everywhere else, so you can just stand there and look strong.

Jules: Yeah, I'll carry the bags. I feel like as I've gotten older I've gotten much more comfortable around having those differences. Yeah, you gregarious and silly and loud, and whatever. And I can celebrate that for you even if I am different.

Victoria: So beautiful. Yeah, I feel like when I was really deep in my codependent habits, I would have judged myself for those kinds of differences, right? Or I would have made it mean there's something lacking about me, like I didn't measure up.

Jules: I think for me, really trying to understand and sink into my most authentic self has allowed me to just get really comfortable in my own skin, but also to be very accepting of other people and their differences. I don't want us all to be like... You and I are very different. We're very, very different, and it doesn't matter at all to me. I mean, except I celebrate it.

Victoria: Right. It's pretty fun.

Jules: I don't need to be like my friends in that way.

Victoria: Yeah, I find it so healing, and so expanding in my heart, every time I look down at my phone and it's you going, "I love you."

Jules: Yeah, it's sweet to receive it and to give it. And for me, text communication has been a great way to stay in touch. A lot of my friends

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are not nearby and so I do phone dates. I do virtual dates, which is a little bit hard because I'm on Zoom all day, but I do it anyway.

I have a game night with one of my friends every week, play games online. And for the people that are farther away, I try to set up a "Let's get together" once a month, or once every other month, or whatever. There's nothing like in-person time if you can make it happen.

Victoria: Yeah. And I think it's really important what you're saying, when that's not easily possible. My beloved friend, April, moved to Scotland in the pandemic. Super rude, though, right? Seriously, someone needs to talk to her. Doctor Blake, move back. It's challenging to meet up in person.

But shifting expectations. For me, not telling the story, "No, we have to have a coffee date, or we won't be as close." I feel like the pandemic really helped me to reestablish that. That non-in-person ways of connecting are just as powerful, right?

Jules: What I've found is, sometimes it is just a simple 'I love you' text or a silly meme. Just to let people know that you're thinking about them, and that they're on your mind. I have a couple of friends who I text or call regularly, and leave messages for, who maybe reciprocate one out of 15 of those.

But they always tell me, "Oh, my God, it means so much to me. I know that you're thinking about me. I really appreciate that, and I don't have the capacity to reciprocate. But I still love you. And I'm so glad that you're doing that."

That's the other thing I learned over the years, every gesture doesn't have to be reciprocated for there to be a meaningful relationship. I've had it on both sides. I have a high school friend, and I'm in my 50s, who just adores me and pours all this love and attention on me. And I'm terrible about

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reciprocating. He's like, "I don't care. I'm just going to love on you." And then, when we get together, it's lovey, lovey, lovey.

And so, yeah, that capacity to understand that friendships have different rhythms and different seasons. And to give your friends that kind of space and graciousness. The tether is somewhat attenuated, and it doesn't mean it's not going to come back together. Having a little more ease and flow, I think has really benefited me over the years.

Victoria: Yeah, when that core connection, when that heart connection has been established. For me, it's when that effort is reciprocal and mutual, in order to establish connection, and it's like our hearts have strings between them. Right? Like little threads.

Like when we were kids and we played telephone with two tin cans and a string. It never really worked, at least not for me. Maybe it's more like walkie talkies. There are walkie talkies between our hearts, with RadioShack batteries. That's beautiful. I love that. I love what you're sharing about giving folks the grace, because we're all moving through our own things we're moving through, right?

Jules: Yeah, and when I don't hear from someone for a while and I reconnect, it's almost always because shit hit the fan for them. And how nice is it when you're in that place, and you still get sweet little texts and notices that they're thinking about you, even though you're like underwater?

Victoria: Yeah, that's a really sweet, tender thing. It really is. Aww, Jules, you're so magnificent.

Jules: Well, we have a mutual admiration society.

Victoria: It's a pretty good one. Well, anything else you want to make sure to share with the good people?

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Jules: I would say it's never too late to make friends. It's never too late to build out that network. And it's worth what might feel like effort or risk. And that there are people out there waiting to love you.

Victoria: Aww, I love that. When talking with Billey, a good friend of mine who's a dating coach, I expressed exactly who I wanted to date. And I was like, "I don't know if that person exists." And he was like, "Well, because you exist, that person exists, right? Because someone as amazing as you exists, that person who you're looking to date exists."

And I think that friend that we're all looking for, those new friends, they're out there because you are. Thank you. Thank you. Hey, I'm going to embarrass you, you ready? She has a new book out; will you tell the good people?

Jules: I work in drug policy, and I have a book out with two coauthors called *Whiteout*. It is about the racial politics of the opioid crisis. It's a real page turner.

Victoria: I bought it to read on the beach, I've got to tell you.

Jules: Actually, it was quite a labor of love. Honestly, speaking of platonic friends, my two coauthors are two very close friends now; that is how I met them. So, you could write a book with people to meet them, that's a way.

Victoria: There's no better way to make friends than writing a book.

Jules: Thank you for the plug, and thank you for the opportunity to be on your podcast and to tell the good people what a good friend you are. I'm grateful for you.

Victoria: Likewise, I'm super-duper grateful for you. Well, thank you. Thank you. I love you, and I'll talk to you soon.

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Jules: I love you, too.

Victoria: Hola, Juana.

Juana: Hola, MV.

Victoria: ¿Que tal?

Juana: Hola hermana, I'm good. Estoy super feliz estar con vos hoy.

Victoria: Estoy tambien. Bueno, por favor, si podrías, en English, introducirte a la gente. If you could share your name and your pronoun, and whose land you're on, that'd be so great.

Juana: Good morning, good afternoon, or whatever time of day it might be. My name is Juana, and my pronouns are she or they. I'm talking to you today from Toronto, which is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississauga, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat. It's still home to many diverse indigenous people today. I'm really grateful to live on this territory, and to do so with a commitment to righting relations.

Victoria: Thank you, Juana. I'm so excited you're here. This is our 25th anniversary of being friends. We met in a nightclub in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1990; like you do. We are both Argentine, which every Spanish speaker immediately knew from listening to us just chat for two seconds. Yeah, I'm excited to talk about friendship with you.

I feel like we don't talk enough about how vital and life giving and restorative and supportive platonic love is, and friendship is. I know you have a lot to say, so I'll just hush my little buttons.

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Juana: Well, you know what? I was thinking about five things that I feel like are really important to cultivating platonic love and friendship. And for me, I was really feeling like the first one is kind of tuning into presence. We kind of have to be tuned into ourselves to be able to tune in and connect with others and open up to others.

I feel like it's been through sort of being present with myself that I've been able to create space to show up for my friends. And to also let my friends show up for me. It's really about building that two-way street. I was thinking a lot about us, that we've navigated this relationship across a long distance.

For me, that kind of key around connecting isn't necessarily the physical proximity, but just how present we've been around each other. And I was thinking about how much I've learned from you about being present. Feeling like ,okay, what I wanted to ask you, it's like, is it the starting point to friendship, or is it just the starting point to living?

Victoria: Being present? Yeah, I think yes, the answer is yes. I know that I am so much more available for authentic, real connection when I'm in presence, right? Because when I'm not present, when I'm distracted, when I'm trying to do a thing... You know back in the day when we were trying to be cool? Oh, my God, it was so tiring. In trying to be cool we're not being ourselves. We're not being authentic. We're trying to play a role.

It's the core of everything I work on, right? We're trying to get someone else to think something about us, because we believe that will make us feel safe, or make us actually safe. It never does, because they're just loving a false self. Right?

Juana: Yeah. So I was thinking that it's through presence, that's the starting point, and then move to cultivating reciprocity in friendship. I think about how presence is sort of like that moment in tending to a garden, where

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you're digging the little rows to plant the seeds. You've got to create that space, and then things can grow from there.

I was thinking a lot about reciprocity, about really seeing and listening to people you're in friendship with, and also being seen and heard. And I feel like that's something we've been really able to cultivate with each other. I just think about how much fun there's been in points of connection that we've had.

For sure, being Argentine is one of them. Just getting to share a maté together, and sing Mercedes Sosa songs together. Or a shared frame of reference for the dictatorship in Argentina, and what that meant in our lives and for our families. The whole empanada.

So, you talked about meeting in a nightclub in 1990. And I was thinking what it was to be those young selves. I mean, I hope I didn't step on your toes while we were dancing. But I might have. Part of just being vulnerable, and making mistakes, and finding that reciprocity with each other, that giving and sharing, that seeing and being seen.

I was thinking it feels a little bit like a secret sauce to friendship. Do you feel like that resonates with you at all?

Victoria: Yeah, allowing the ebb and flow. I was thinking of... a quick note on presence... A lot of people come to me not really understanding how to step into presence, and what that means, and what that looks like. And I totally get that, because I didn't get it for a long time.

And part of why I wanted to talk about friendships... Because they are such a beautiful place to practice, right? For those of us who come from emotional outsourcing, from codependent, perfectionist, and peoplepleasing households, our attachment styles aren't about our adult relationships. They're what we learned in childhood for survival, right?

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So, I can't be in insecure attachment with an adult partner, because they're about survival, their survival skills. And I can live without my adult partner, right? That said, that stuff gets triggered in adult relationships, in romantic relationships, because they're the closest thing we have to a survival relationship. Right?

We can use the playground of friendship to try out. Like, "Okay, I can be really open with Juana. What's going to happen? Is she going to be open with me? Is she going to meet me? Is she going to reject me? What's going to happen?"

Juana: Yeah, it's about navigating those boundaries, isn't it?

Victoria: Yeah, and limits.

Juana: That really resonates for me. That's been a gift of our friendship, and a gift of friendships. To be able to put on our training wheels, or like being on that playground with each other, around limits. And yeah.

Victoria: I just heard, who can I be and still be loved? We get to practice that. What's the limit of that today? How much can my nervous system stay regulated around? And how much can I be met? And what do I need to do to then build more strength and resilience and capacity within myself to step 1% further into my authenticity?

Juana: Just being able to honor that. In the ways that with our friends we can be talking about how we're kind of growing into ourselves, or setting our boundaries in relationships. Friendships are sometimes a place where you can go and be like, "Hey, I tried setting this limit. Here's how it went." A sounding board.

Victoria: Building that trust with friends, I think, particularly when we're doing this work of overcoming codependent thinking, is so vital. Because

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for me, earlier on in this work, I had no idea what was real and what was true. What was what? What were the machinations of my survival skills and my mind?

When was I actually being treated poorly? When was someone actually being a jerk or a meany-pants? And when was it my brain, my habits? When was it me, and when was it not? Running that by the people I love helps me to see it more bitterly. You know what I mean?

Juana: One hundred percent. That feels like such a good segue to the fourth thing I was thinking about, which is, through friendship you can kind of really explore life's fullness. Life is going to be life-y, full stop. Friends might get you through that. But also, the moments of joy and celebration that you can create with friends, they really sustain us.

There's such an ebb and flow to life. I think about the ways that friendship has been such a place of solace at times for me, and I've been kind of seen in the grief for the hard moments of life. That's what feels real about friendship for me. Where we can hold all of those spaces. It kind of feels like where magic lives for me, in friendship. Do you have a sense of where magic lives for you in friendship?

Victoria: Wow, I'm just processing that; that's where that magic lives. Yeah, for me, I have this tight-knit group of incredible humans texting me 'I love you' all the time. I was thinking about reciprocity, and how much I used to over give from fear and worry, of my energy, but also presence and things and time and ba-ba-ba. Like, "Love me, love me. I'm scared I'm not lovable. I have to tap dance for this love ability."

And now, you and I have this really balanced gift-giving thing that is so much fun. We always show up to each other's house or with little cositas, and it's so sweet.

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Juana: I think too, because of the distance between us, I love how in my house I see little gifts you've given me. They feel like bread crumbs. That in some ways, are a little trail, a little reminder. That are like, "Oh, this gorgeous glass blown ornament that MV gave to me. I'm going to text her a little 'I love you'."

Yeah, just these little breadcrumb trails to remember to tend to each other. And to also connect, especially because of the distance, right? We can't just pop over to each other's houses, so we'd better find other ways. Not yet.

Victoria: Not yet. But someday. I look forward to that day. It really is such a balm, the love that I feel for my friends. It's such a gift to be able to express that love, and know that it'll be well received. Right?

Where I currently live, someone who was building what I thought was a really beautiful friendship with, she just ghosted. She owed me an apology after messing up. Made a big deal about how, "Oh, I'll make it up to you. I'm so sorry. I effed up." This was last September. It's now February, and I still haven't heard from her.

So, it's just a really interesting thing to step into a level of emotional maturity, which we talked about so much here, right? Where we can be an adult and use our words, which is so challenging so often. I don't think either of us is out here like, "It's super easy to tell someone you don't want to be their friend." No, it's challenging.

It's just such a reminder for me of the importance of my integrity, and honoring my dignity and that of others. Also, we can get so conflictavoidant, and that's when we end up ghosting. That, I think, is the grand scale of dehumanization that's happening writ large across the planet. We don't treat each other like humans.

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Juana: Totally. This is the thing about doing the work and skilling up in some ways, in terms of our ability to be in relationships too. Is that also you can see that experience that just happened around ghosting.

Victoria: Oh, like 1,000,000%. For me, I really took it as the gift of a reminder of how much I've grown, thanks to the work of so many who have come before me, who have paved the way.

I mean, it was just Audrey Lorde's and Toni Morrison's birthdays, that's exciting, right? Thinking of so many poets and writers and psychologists, and really amazing humans and amazing friends, who have shown me what it means to stand in my dignity.

Juana: Totally. I think that's the thing about friendship. I feel like, through friendship, I kind of nurture my own heart. Also, like there's a piece of it that really feels like it's about nurturing a kind of collective heart of community, too. And friends and the communities that we're building and that we're contributing to.

It kind of reminds me of, I think I might have heard you say once or twice, when we heal ourselves we help heal the world. I think there's such a part of that, that connects to friendship for me, too. About ourselves, nurturing ourselves, in relationship and the collective heart of community.

Victoria: Right, which is really extending the story of what love is possible beyond a romantic dyad. You and I are both in really super loving, amazing relationships. And we love each other, that builds more love. And then I love your kids, and that builds more love. And it just ripples out and out and out; more love, more love, more love.

Juana: I mean, we're just thinking about a really strong queer lineage around building chosen family; that's what you are to me. And that's what

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true friendship does, it builds that chosen family. And I feel that that's such a beautiful inheritance.

Victoria: And Suneye and I actually talked about the same theme, of chosen family. And for her, it was from the angle of being an immigrant, and how there's challenges; we are all immigrant daughters. There are challenges when you have such a vast cultural shift to this new world, to Canada and the U.S., from where we came from. That we can understand each other the way our parents just can't.

They're a different generation, and in some ways, it feels like from a different planet at times, in terms of communication and other skills. Which is not a dis, y'all, it's actually me creating spaciousness. I honor that you're coming from somewhere really different than where we got planted as kiddos.

And so, the chosen family that we can create as immigrants is such a gift. Because no one gets it who's not us, right?

Juana: Yeah, and I think, sometimes the stories around chosen family, they come out of a rejection or an alienation from our families of origin. And sometimes they do, they don't necessarily have to coexist, right? This notion of, 'we don't have to be stingy or greedy with our love.' Our love has something expansive, with enough to go around. Plenty.

Victoria: Yeah, the more often I text you, or Jules, "I love you. I love you. It's Wednesday morning at 10. I love you. It's Thursday at two, and I love you. Whatever, whatever, I love you." The more I get that back, it creates so much more love for me to then, when I go to the YMCA to work out, I'm that much kinder to the sweet kiddo at the front desk. Because I just got a text from you that says, "I love you," out of nowhere.

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Juana: I just think about someone who's maybe not ready to say 'I love you.' Because it's hard to say 'I love you' to a friend, but just kitten steps, right? You send someone a cute meme to let them know you're thinking about them. There are just so many ways that we can begin to build those connections.

Victoria: Yeah, it's so important. Relationships take cultivation. I love your garden metaphor. It really does take cultivation. Sending the text, sending the email, sending the snail mail, making postcards, taking pictures, it doesn't have to be capitalism and buying your friends presents. You can take a picture and say something like, "I'm at the store and I saw this, and thought of you." That's so nice.

Juana: Yeah, I'm just thinking about the garden, and my mind is out in my garden. But just feeling connected to the lands that we live on. And what we've got to learn from what's happening in the natural world around us, including what it has to teach us about friendship; lots of lessons there.

Victoria: I just thinking about winter and soup, and how much I want to have you over. You can have soup. Wouldn't that be so nice?

Juana: That would be so nice. I love it when you send me pictures of a soup that you're making.

Victoria: I love sending food pictures. I know, it's so silly. We were talking in Anchored a couple of weeks ago, someone was feeling like it's really hard to make adult friendships because she doesn't know what to talk about. And she puts a lot of pressure on herself to say the right things or talk about something profound.

I don't have much tolerance for b.s., small talk with people I want to connect with. But with a taxi driver, it's my favorite. It's so much fun. But

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you and I go deep. We also do talk a lot about food, and I don't know, hikes, and just the quotidian. It's just a place to share your everyday life.

Juana: Well, I think all of it is important, right? It can also be overwhelming to kind of be getting to know someone and to feel like they're just diving right into something really deep. Sometimes you've got to take those kitten steps and kind of move into friendships with awareness. And I'd say that's over building a friendship, but even in the context of a conversation.

Sometimes I think there's that piece too, around, are we building into a conversation and making sure the other person consents? Something I've really loved about the friendship between us is we both have grown a lot in that way. But there's a check-in, really a consent piece over our friendship and our conversations, and where we go with our conversation.

Victoria: Yeah. Can we get the good people an example, for folks who haven't heard this kind of languaging? We've talked about on the show before, but I think it's important.

Juana: Are you looking to me to come up with an example?

Victoria: No, I can do it. I can do it. Okay, great. Hey, Juana, I just had a really challenging conversation with someone, and I'd really like to just vent about it. I don't need any advice. I don't actually want any advice. I really just need to be heard. Are you available for that?

Juana: Yeah, I'm here. I can listen.

Victoria: Thank you. How about, Juana, I just don't know where to go with this decision around this work thing? Are you available to hear me and maybe give me some advice?

Juana: Yeah, I love problem solving.

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Victoria: I know you do. Okay, Capricorn.

Juana: I love that in both of those examples you really clearly stated what you needed from me. I feel like I have a job to do then. To kind of listen and honor that. In the first example you were like, "I need to be heard." I really need to hold that in that conversation.

Victoria: Will you feel comfortable asking me one, so I can do an example of saying no? Because ooh, that's hard if you don't know how to do it.

Juana: Or if you've never heard it. Okay. I just had a really hard interaction with my mom. I felt really triggered, and it's feeling really unresolved for me. I'm not even sure what I need.

Victoria: Yeah, oh, my love. Well, first of all, I'm so sorry that that happened. I know you love her. And I know, for me, when parental conversations go sort of sideways it can just activate so much little kid stuff. I am on a really tight deadline for work. And I really want to honor what you're sitting with right now.

But I know that 96% of my brain is like, "You have to get this email written in the next hour." So, I don't want to be rude to you, or not honor you and your needs, and I don't want to feel stressed out while I'm listening to you. Can we meet up in an hour, and I can give you my full attention then, would that work for you?

Juana: That works. Oh, it just felt so good to hear. So nice. Goes back to our training. We all comment, right? Being able to in friendships and assert those limits, I feel like what it does for me, and what it's done in the context of our friendship, is create this deep trust. Because I feel I can trust when you say yes/no, or maybe to me, right?

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Victoria: Yeah, it's such a gift. Likewise, I always trust your word. There's something magical about when someone tells you, "No, no, I can't do it. I'm not interested. I'm not available." The yes is so much more yes-er.

Juana: And when we've grown up people pleasing, the no is hard.

Victoria: Until it's not, though, right? Takes some practice, so why not practice with your friends?

Juana: There's no reason not to.

Victoria: Yeah, ay, mi Juana, I feel like we could talk forever and ever.

Juana: And mama, it's been so nice to connect with you. I love you.

Victoria: I love you, too.

Juana: I'm your biggest fan.

Victoria: Eguamente. Give [inaudible] un beso.

Juana: Bye.

My love, thank you so much for tuning into this episode. It has been so beautiful to talk about the power of friendship and platonic love. It has been such a healing source of sustenance for me, for these many years. A Bell Hooks quote comes to mind, "One of the most vital ways we sustain ourselves is by building communities of resistance, places where we know we are not alone."

With that in mind, I'll invite you to release the story that it's hard to make friends as an adult. I'm not saying it's not. What I'm saying is if you focus on that, it will feel so much harder than it needs to. And I will then invite you to

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look for friends, to look for connection, to look for community, around the things that matter to you. Around the things that you value and cherish.

If it's activism, join an activist community. If it's ceramics, join a ceramics community. If you have a kid with epilepsy, find other parents of kids with disabilities or kids with medical challenges. If you want to learn a foreign language, look for people who have similar interests and values with you.

It's similar advice to what I've shared around dating and romantic relationships. When we can connect around what really matters, we make connections that matter. Right? So with that, I leave you and thank you again for listening.

If you are ready to get the kind of love and care and support I know you deserve, as you work to overcome your own emotional outsourcing, to build vibrant friendships and romantic relationships, I would be profoundly honored and grateful to be your coach. Head on over to VictoriaAlbina.com/Anchored to learn all about my six-month life coaching and somatics program.

We also do breathwork, we work on mind, body, and spirit in community, in collective. It's my favorite place on earth. I share my 20+ years in health, wellness, somatic psychology. I'm pretty obsessed with Anchored, and I don't use colloquial terms like, "I'm so obsessed with it," a lot, but I wake up thinking about Anchored. I go to sleep thinking about Anchored. In a really healthy way, don't worry.

But it's just my favorite thing. I always am thinking how can I make it a little better today, and so, it's so much fun. I'd love to have you join us.

Alright, my angel, 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

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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.