

## Ep #293: Bracing Tolerance vs. Intentional Tolerance



### 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 came up with another amazing metaphora, and I am so stoked to share it. From the brain that brought you Taller Toddlers, episode 190. Remember that one?

It was like, we do all these things to take care of ourselves when we are an actual toddler, and then we are like 35 or 45 and we have not properly rested or fed ourselves or like, taking care of ourselves and then we are wondering why we feel bonkers, you are a taller toddler and I want you to treat you like one.

From the brain that came up with Be the Cake, episode 166, kitten steps, which I started looking for like the original episode where I talked about kitten steps and it is unfindable. I talk about it everywhere, all the time. So from the brain that brought you those three and like 473 other random metaphors I cannot even come up with comes bracing an intentional tolerance.

So now like hearing it out loud, it is not like such a great metaphor in that it is not cute or funny, but it is also such a great metaphor because it is so evocative of the thing that it is about. And I think it will really help you to feel what I am talking about and thus get the concept and see it in your life and apply the remedies we will soon discuss to shift this experience. And come on, is not that what it is all about?

I mean, it helps if it is cute, if it is like taller toddler, be the cake, or kitten steps, but does it have to be hilarious to heal? I think not. It does help. So I

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will come up with another cute metaphor for you soon enough, something like let your inner chipmunks do backflips. And that will mean like some really profound thing about self-love and it will be great. And we will be back to LOLing soon, pinky promise, but for now, let's get into this because I am really excited about it.

And when I came up with it, it just felt really great. You know when you have been thinking about something for a long time and working on it, working with it, and then suddenly the language clicks? So my goddess of a book editor, Hannah, I love you. We were talking about boundaries and how when you are new to setting them, they often need to be made of like actual reinforced steel because we are so scared they will crumble otherwise.

And so when we are new to this work, we set some really intense limits that are maybe overdoing it, but it is because it is so new, right? And so overdoing it is totally expectable, totally understandable, no judgments on that, right? The work is to expand our nervous system so we do not need, so we do not have, to use the Buddhist term, grasping at such intense boundaries to do the work for us because we are able to flow with what is without letting it F us up like it used to.

And from that conversation, the framework of bracing versus intentional tolerance was born. And yeah, sure, the language is still clunky, but I am loving it for what it explains and what it does. I am using the word tolerance here which to be real is a word I do not like, but I am using it because science. It is a word used in the nervous system, nerd world, to talk about our capacity to stay regulated and present with and in ourselves when life happens to and around us.

So the term in like the science and the papers is window of tolerance. And we have talked about it here before. The scientific definition of tolerance

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refers to an organism's ability to endure, adapt to, or resist changes in the environment without experiencing significant damage or alterations in function.

So effectively, tolerance is how much BS you and your nervous system can be with, put up with, be surrounded by before you lose your cool and start throwing tables or shut down and crawl to the back of the cave. And that is what we are working with today. The window of tolerance in your nervous system and how much garbage we tolerate in emotional outsourcing. Got it? Got it.

Okay, so, the difference between bracing tolerance and intentional tolerance in the healing journey on out of emotional outsourcing is a profound shift, both somatically and physiologically. When we emotionally outsource, habitually placing other people's emotions, needs, or reactions ahead of our own in a bid for safety, connection, and validity, we often find ourselves locked in a state of what I am now calling bracing tolerance, like the kind of tolerance that feels like a physical or emotional contraction. attempt to muscle through discomfort to grit our teeth and bear it.

Bracing tolerance is survival mode. It is putting up with and feeling put upon, and it sucks. It is rooted in fear and the nervous system's learned responses to threats perceived or real that come from disappointing others, speaking our truth, or setting boundaries. It feels like there is an invisible rope pulled tight within our bodies, holding us rigid as we attempt to navigate the discomfort of unmet needs, unexpressed desires, and the constant negotiation of ourselves in relation to others.

This kind of tolerance is built on resentment, tension, manipulation, and self-abandonment. It is the, "Fine, I will tolerate this, I will put up with it, I am going to feel really resentful and annoyed and irritated, and I am definitely keeping score," energy of swallowing our no, holding our breath,

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and pushing through situations that feel somewhere between ough and like deeply wrong. All in the name of maintaining some semblance of connection or avoiding conflict or potential abandonment.

So all of that was what it sounded like on the inside, but on the outside, it sounds like, “Yeah, sure, fine. Yeah, I can do that, totally. No, I mean, I had some other plans, but like I will cancel them. It sounds like this is really important to you. So like, yeah, no, no, I can do that.”

Physically, we might notice tightness in our jaw, clenching in our gut, shoulders hunch and stiff, shallow breathing, a flare of IBS or other belly pain, joint pain, headaches. Emotionally, we are tapped out, exhausted from the hypervigilance of keeping other people's feelings in check while disregarding our own. Our nervous system ping-ponging with the sympathetic and dorsal all over the place.

In essence, bracing tolerance comes from a place of unresolved fear and a lack of safety within ourselves. It reflects a deep-seated nervous system pattern often from childhood, from our socialization and our conditioning within white settler colonialism, late-stage capitalism, and of course, the patriarchy that says, “I have to tolerate this BS, this mistreatment, this denial of my capital S self, my preferences, my desires, my wants, who I actually am in order to be saved, loved, or thought of as worthy.”

Because as folks with emotional outsourcing habits, we were taught that our safety and belonging depend on accommodating others even when it costs us so dearly. But then, as we do the work I am always talking about here, the somatic and thought work, the breath work, the community connection, the regulation work, the work we do every day for six months in Anchored, in community, slowly but surely, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, gently, something shifts.

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Healing from emotional outsourcing means learning to inhabit our bodies, to listen to our own needs, and to recognize that true connection does not come from betraying ourselves, but from showing up authentically with our needs and desires intact. Enter intentional tolerance.

Intentional tolerance is radically different. It is not even really tolerating per se, but I wanted a term that made sense and sounded cute with the former state of being the annoying embracing tolerance. So listen, here we are. Intentional tolerance is grounded in conscious choice and comes from a place of self-worth, resilience, self-regard, and the capacity to regulate our nervous system.

Rather than being driven by fear and self-abandonment, intentional tolerance has its roots in grounded presence and arises from a deep understanding of your capacity to hold complexity and discomfort, to be with life in its life-ness, not as a sacrifice of yourself, but as an act of agency, autonomy, and compassion.

In intentional tolerance, we allow space for things that might be difficult, it is uncomfortable, annoying, or outside of our preference. And we do so because we choose to. Not from obligation, not because we feel we must, or from the sneakiest of all, to try to make someone else feel something. Something like beholden to us, grateful for and to us, pleased with us, et cetera. Intentional tolerance is not manipulative, like bracing tolerance is.

It is the difference between white-knuckling through a conversation that feels invalidating and choosing to stay curious and present, grounded in your body, because you decided it is worth staying engaged for the larger context or the larger relationship. And because you no longer need to disengage from life to keep yourself safer because you know you have your own back. You are not actually going to allow yourself to be thrown off the proverbial emotional cliff into the emotional pit of despair by someone's

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comments that you do not agree with. Because you have done the work to expand your capacity in your nervous system to stay with you when you don't like what is going on. Nary a table need be flipped, you are able to stay chill, grounded, unbothered. And wow, is that the magic.

This shift often comes with increased somatic awareness. When we heal and learn how to regulate our nervous system, we become more adept at noticing when our bodies are moving into a bracing pattern. Our muscles tighten, our breath gets shallow. That feeling that life is coming at us, happening to us, is all we can experience. We do not need a trigger warning, we need a machete to cut off anything bothersome the F out of our lives.

But with healing, we learn that rather than letting that tension run the show, we can intentionally soften us into discomfort, inviting our parasympathetic nervous system to engage, slowing our breath, long slow out, and staying connected to our experience of self which we know is indelible.

We choose to hang out, be with, stay present with, get curious about difficult emotions, conversations, experiences. Not because we need to keep someone else happy or whatever, but because we are committed to our own growth, to building resilience, to navigating life with integrity, and to building internal felt safety, which we talked about in episode 275.

Intentional tolerance is the kind of tolerance that holds both self and other with care. It is the realization that I can hold space for you and me, both at once. I can listen to your pain without outsourcing my sense of worth to whether or not I can fix your problems. I can tolerate your anger, your criticism, or your fear because I know who I am in the face of it. My nervous system isn't holding on for dear life waiting for this to end. It is grounded in the truth that I am safe to be me, even here.



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This shift does not mean we suddenly tolerate everything. Au contraire. Healing from emotional outsourcing often involves, I mean generally starts with, learning to say, “No thank you.” “Oh, you want to engage in hate speech? I am not interested in and hearing it, thanks so much, I gave her the office.” You know what I mean?

Like saying no, not available. With clarity and firmness. Learning when to walk away from what no longer serves us. Relationships, friendships, relationships with parents, jobs, towns, apartments, I mean, on and on. Conversations, obviously.

And in that, learning when to assert our boundaries. Super important. And it also means that when we do choose to stay in the discomfort, we do so with full awareness and intention for our own growth. We choose it from a place of inner knowing, recognizing that discomfort is not the same as danger. I am going to say that again for the folks in the cheap seats. Discomfort is not the same as danger.

And when we trust ourselves and we trust our growth and we know we have our own backs, we know we have the tools to stay present, grounded, and connected to ourselves, no matter how uncomfortable the conversation or situation may feel. So while bracing tolerance is reactive, a flinch in the face of fear, intentional tolerance is proactive. It is the embodiment of our own emotional resilience, our capacity to stay with ourselves, even when things get hard, without losing our sense of self collapsing into the old patterns of people-pleasing perfectionism or caretaking that once defined our entire emotional landscape.

It is the difference between surviving and thriving. Trying to control the world outside of us to avoid emotions and trusting, knowing, believing, and living in the embodiment of the fact that we can be with all feelings, and none of them are going to kill us, no matter how much it feels that way.

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In this new space of intentional tolerance, we learn that we are no longer just putting up with life or other people, we are navigating complexity with grace, holding space for both ourselves and others with a calm confidence that comes from knowing that we are inherently worthy, that we belong to ourselves and our beloved community, and that we can choose what we tolerate and why.

Above all, I wish you curiosity, compassion, and care, and a mind, heart, body, spirit, nervous system that is truly and profoundly unbothered. That is my hope for you, my darling. Thank you for listening. Let me know if this was helpful and supportive. I am always curious what sparked for you when we take these deep dives, and I want to hear all about it.

If you are looking to live a life where you are able to be in that intentionality, in more presence and grounded okay-ness in your body and thus your world, you are going to want to join us for Anchored, my six-month coaching, somatics, thought work, and breath work community-based program where we dive deep into nervous system regulation while working to support and shift our mindset, be a loving, kind place for our inner children to land and heal and to cultivate lives we friggin love while leaving the old anxiety, self-doubt, and rumination in the past.

We start November 4th 2024, and this will be the last cohort of the year. So if you have been wanting to work with me, wanting to experience the massive shifts been hearing about from alumni who have been coming on the show, don't hesitate. The program always sells out. Always. Just facts, my darling. So if you are ready to join us, come on, let's go. Head on over to [victoriaalbina.com/anchored](https://victoriaalbina.com/anchored) to learn more and apply now. I cannot wait to meet you and to talk more about this wildly life-changing community program.

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All right, my angels, let's do what we do. 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 will talk to you soon. Ciao.

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](http://VictoriaAlbina.com/somaticswebinar) for a free webinar all about it. Have a beautiful day, my darling, and I'll see you next week. Ciao.