

Ep #322: Why You Keep Fighting the Same Fights (And How to Actually Shift Them)



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 B ea 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 beauty, let's get real about something that can make or break a relationship, and that is conflict. If you're in a relationship where every disagreement turns into an exhausting emotional marathon, if you keep cycling through the same arguments with different words, if you walk away from fights feeling worse, not better, you, my tender love, you're not alone.

If you're in a relationship where fights aren't just exhausting when they happen, but they are constant, where the same wounds kept getting ripped open. Dehissing is the medical term for that. Isn't that a great word? Where conflict feels like a cycle that just never ends, where you've tried everything and nothing shifts, it's time to take a breath and really look at what might be happening. Because fighting can be repaired, patterns can change, but only if both people are willing to do something different. And that something different often involves some pretty deep work.

So, some people fight about big things: money, values, trust. Some people fight about small things: dishwashers, text tone, how their partner breathed just a little too loud last night. Some people don't fight at all; they just stew in silent resentment, wondering why their partner can't read their minds and give them what they want.

And, because note of hope, I will also add that some people don't fight because they don't have anything to fight about. They're both deep in their regulation and grounding, and they're living interdependently and pretty much see life eye to eye. And when conflict arises, they chat it out, bending with ease to meet the other person while never self-abandoning, and it never rises to the level of conflict. So, as we go into talking all about what's wrong, I do want you to know that that also exists.

Ep #322: Why You Keep Fighting the Same Fights (And How to Actually Shift Them)

Meanwhile, no matter what you and your person are fighting about, the pattern generally doesn't change. Tension builds, fight happens, and by the end, instead of feeling closer, you feel exhausted, stuck, and sometimes even more disconnected than before. So what's happening with this kind of conflict? Why does your nervous system react so strongly to something as normal as disagreement? And more importantly, how do you stop feeling like every fight is either a battle or a slow moving disaster?

Because here's the thing, my love. Conflict isn't just about communication, it's about your nervous system. Your brain might know that this thing that's just happening, it's just a disagreement about laundry, schedules, who's cooking, who's cleaning, who's scooping the cat litter, whatever. Your brain might know that your partner isn't actually abandoning you just because they don't agree. Your brain might even know that this is a moment, not a catastrophe. But your nervous system? It's already on high alert.

Because your nervous system isn't tracking the logic, it's tracking the risk. Your autonomic nervous system, ANS, the part of you responsible for survival is constantly scanning for safety or threat. And it does not distinguish between physical danger and emotional danger. It doesn't care that this is just an argument about who should have picked up the groceries. It doesn't care that this isn't the end of the relationship, or if it is. It only cares about what conflict has meant for you in the past.

If you grew up in a home where conflict meant yelling, insults, slamming doors, walking on eggshells, your nervous system learned to brace for impact. If past relationships taught you that conflict led to emotional withdrawal, stonewalling or punishment, your body learned that arguments equal abandonment. If you had to keep the peace to stay safe, your body learned that losing a fight was dangerous. And now every disagreement feels wildly high stakes.

And so, even when your brain knows this is just a conversation, your body reacts as if your entire connection is on the line. And this is why fights can

Ep #322: Why You Keep Fighting the Same Fights (And How to Actually Shift Them)

feel so intense, even when they like shouldn't. This is why you find yourself getting defensive before the other person has even finished their sentence. This is why you shut down, overexplain, or explode. Pick one or several. Even when you desperately want to stay present and grounded and calm.

Because my beauty, your body isn't reacting to what's happening now. It's reacting to everything it's ever learned about what conflict means. And this is why your partner can say literally one wrong word and it feels like an emotional gut punch. Why a conversation about something as banal as dishes can somehow feel like it's about your entire worth.

Because your body isn't responding to their words, it's responding to every unresolved fight you've ever had with them and everyone who came before them. This isn't just about today's argument. It's about everything your nervous system has been holding on to for years.

And this doesn't just show up in romantic relationships. If you've ever felt like you're fighting the same fight with your parents, your kids, your best friend, guess what? That is your nervous system too. Maybe you get instantly defensive when your mom gives helpful feedback. "Oh, you could have ironed that shirt." Because somewhere deep down, your body remembers what it felt like to never be good enough in her eyes.

Maybe your teenager's attitude makes you snap before you even realize what's happening, because the tone of their voice is hitting a way older wound inside of you, and it's not about this snarky 15-year-old in front of you. Or maybe you let a friend overstep your boundaries time and time again because saying no feels like risking the relationship, even though you know you're starting to resent them.

The nervous system doesn't just store conflict patterns from your romantic relationships; it's holding every unresolved fight, every moment you didn't feel safe speaking up, every relationship where conflict meant rejection, control, punishment.

Ep #322: Why You Keep Fighting the Same Fights (And How to Actually Shift Them)

So, if you find yourself reacting before you even understand why, with family, kids, close friends, take a beat and ask yourself, am I reacting to this moment or to every time this has happened before? Because when we start tracking the pattern, we can start shifting it.

So, when conflict happens, your nervous system picks a response automatically without asking your permission, which if you're asking me, I find that rude. Rude. It's rude. You know, I guess in a moment of feeling really heated when you're projecting your childhood wounds onto your partner, you might be like, I'll fight all the time.

So let's start there. Let's start with the fight response, which is the like, we are solving this now. So some people go straight into fight. Their voice gets sharper, their words come faster, and they cannot stand the idea of leaving it unresolved. This is the like, never go to sleep angry, which I do not like that. Go to sleep angry, get a good night's rest. When you're rested in the morning, come back to it when you've had a moment to process.

But folks who go straight to fight, they argue harder, they push forward, they demand resolution immediately now. If the other person wants space, they panic because distance feels like rejection, which is tantamount to death and doom. And so they feel flooded with urgency because they're revved up on adrenaline, sympathetic, like that fight or flight, but the fight part of it. And they can't get rest until it's talked out.

For example, your partner says, I need some time to think before we keep talking. I'd like to table this. This is something you talked about in therapy. You've got a whole system. But instead of being able to take that at face value, your nervous system interprets it as them pulling away, denying you the resolution you want, and somehow hurting you, right? Leaving you potentially open to abandonment. So what do you do? You push harder. You demand an answer. You escalate, even though a break would probably help.

Ep #322: Why You Keep Fighting the Same Fights (And How to Actually Shift Them)

And so the shift here is learning to slow the urgency. Your nervous system is screaming, "Fix it now!" But most fights don't need immediate resolution. They need regulation. And if you're the one who always pushes to talk it out while your partner pulls away, let me tell you something. In this moment, you're not overreacting just because your body craves resolution. Your nervous system isn't broken. You're just working from a blueprint that says connection isn't safe unless it's secured right now.

But real, steady love, it can handle a pause. It can survive discomfort. And I doubt you'll believe me right now, but so can you. And so your work is to learn to regulate your nervous system so you can regulate you, you can orient you, you can ground you and you're not demanding that your partner do it for you. Leads to a lot more peace in relationships.

Two, the flight response. AKA, I need to get out of this right now, immediately or sooner. So some people can't handle, don't have the capacity in their nervous system to handle conflict in the moment and their nervous system wants out. They feel overwhelmed, overstimulated, desperate to leave. If they can't leave, they dissociate or mentally check out. They'll say things like, I can't do this. I just need to go. And they mean it because their body is screaming for escape.

For example, your partner says, "We need to talk about something important," and your body immediately goes into overdrive. Heart racing, stomach clenching. Your mind starts calculating the quickest exit. The shift is to learn to take space intentionally, not reactively. Instead of just bolting, try saying, I need 20 minutes to ground myself, and I promise I'll come back. Let's both set a timer. Because leaving isn't the problem. Not coming back is. Yeah?

Three, the freeze response. AKA, I literally can't respond. Some people don't fight or flee. They shut down completely. They feel disconnected, emotionally numb, unable to speak. Their mind goes blank and no words

Ep #322: Why You Keep Fighting the Same Fights (And How to Actually Shift Them)

come. They aren't ignoring you. This is not under conscious control. They literally can't process fast enough to respond.

For example, your partner asks, "Why didn't you tell me you were upset earlier?" and you just can't respond. Not because you don't care, but because your brain has shut down to keep you safe. The shift? Learn to signal what's happening. Even saying, "I don't have words right now, but I'm here," gives the other person something to work with.

You could ask for co-regulation if that's available, if you feel safe enough in the relationship, and if touch would be nice. Could you give me a hug? Could you give me some deep pressure? I'm feeling numb. Could you help me ground?

You could also try writing these kinds of statements on some index cards and keeping them in your nightstand or your wallet or somewhere where they're easily accessible and talking to the people you love about this habit of freezing in your nervous system and going emotionally numb, not being able to find your words, and agree ahead of time that you'll pull out these cards and present them so the other person can understand what's happening, and you can sort of ahead of time decide what might be helpful and then find your way to it, right? And get some support.

Four, the fawn response. That's, let's just make this go away. So some people default to people pleasing in conflict. They smooth things over, apologize first, keep the peace. They don't say what they actually feel because their nervous system has learned that conflict is unsafe. The fight ends, but later they feel resentful, and they definitely feel unheard, which is really interesting because they're like, oh, you know what? I'm so sorry. Don't worry about it. It's cool. It's cool. It's cool.

For example, your partner says, "I feel like you don't listen when I talk." Instead of checking with your actual feelings, you go straight to agreeing, apologizing, making it better. The shift is learning to pause before you

Ep #322: Why You Keep Fighting the Same Fights (And How to Actually Shift Them)

appease. Pause before you appease. If your instinct is to say, "You're right, I'm sorry," take a breath and ask, do I actually mean that?

Because if you're raised to believe that keeping the peace is your job, that's the quickest way to fix a fight, right? To smooth things over. Then of course your first instinct is to apologize whether you mean it or not. But my love, your comfort, your truth, your reality matters too. Your truth belongs in the conversation and you don't have to disappear just to keep the peace.

I'll also add that if you start disappearing in your relationship, you start not being there just to keep things copasetic in a moment of conflict, over time, the less you're there, the less you're there. Your authentic self isn't in the space and you're both not truly loving your partner or the other person in this conflict moment. You're not allowing yourself to be loved.

So, if your relationship is a constant cycle of fights with no repair, my love, it's time to bring in outside voices. Talk to your friends. Talk to someone who knows you and won't just tell you what you want to hear. Because listen, my love, some fights can be worked through, and some fights are telling you something deeper.

If you're doing your best to regulate, to communicate, to change the pattern, if you're really liking the way you're showing up, right? If at the end of a conversation or a conflict, you're like, wow, look at me. Like, I really showed up as the grownup I want to be in conversation. And you're like impressed with yourself, but nothing is actually shifting, that's data.

If you leave every argument feeling hollow, if you're constantly wondering, "Is it me? Am I the problem?" Pause. Take a breath. Because my love, if every fight leaves you feeling like you are the issue, if you're walking away thinking, maybe I'm just bad at relationships, that's not just conflict. That's a pattern. And like we've been talking about, patterns aren't just about you, they're about the dynamic you're in. The way conflict unfolds is a co-creation. As an Argentine, I do officially get to say, it takes two to tango.

Ep #322: Why You Keep Fighting the Same Fights (And How to Actually Shift Them)

And while you can work on your part, you cannot fix a fight that only one person is willing to change. If you are doing the work and they're staying the same, that's not a communication issue. That's an imbalance in nervous system capacity for sure, and in effort. And no amount of nervous system regulation can fix a fight that only one person is trying to resolve. A relationship takes two nervous systems willing to engage differently.

If your partner in conflict isn't ready, willing, or able to show up differently when life gets life-y and things get tough, then my love, you might not be able to right this ship alone. Because if you're waiting for them to just magically understand how to navigate conflict better without actually doing any work on it, without talking about it, without unpacking their own nervous system patterns, without meeting you in the middle, then you're waiting for a version of them that doesn't exist yet.

And my love, how much longer do you want to wait? Not to be like YOLO, but kind of. And by the way, this is next week's topic, episode 323, Relationship Magical Realism. So pause, you can you can leave me talking, but make sure that you've subscribed to the show, that you're following the show, that you've followed me on social media. It's my whole long name, Beatriz, B E A T R I Z, Victoria Albina, NP, so that you don't miss an episode because we're going deep on relationships and this work matters.

Because love isn't the absence of conflict. Love is learning how to stay connected through it. This isn't about winning fights. It's not about who's right and who's wrong, because who cares? It's about learning how to navigate conflict in a way that doesn't cost you your relationship, your self-respect, your nervous system health.

When fights become about winning, you both lose. And if you've ever won an argument only to realize later that your victory prize is a tense silent dinner and sleeping with your backs turned, that's not the kind of win anybody wants.

Ep #322: Why You Keep Fighting the Same Fights (And How to Actually Shift Them)

But when fights become about understanding, repair, and building trust, that's when something actually shifts. So do this work to recognize the patterns, bring in other voices to hear you and help you hear yourself. And as you start to realize what your nervous system tends to do in conflict, see if it's safe enough to share that with the person you have conflict with the most. See if there could be a conversation about the patterns both of your nervous systems tend to go to so that you can co-regulate, support yourself and one another.

My tenderest ravioli, real intimacy is about safety. And when you learn to regulate through conflict, love stops being something you have to fight for and starts being something you can trust.

Thank you for joining me, my beauty. I hope this is supportive. 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'll talk to you soon. Ciao 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 BeatrizAlbina.com/somaticswebinar for a free webinar all about it. Have a beautiful day, my darling, and I'll see you next week. Ciao.