

Ep #327: Consent and Requests in Conversation



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With Your Host

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This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine expert, and life coach Béa 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. So, picture this. You're sitting in the kitchen, cutting veggies after a really long day, at the end of a really long week, and you're trying to decompress. Your partner walks in and starts venting about their coworker, that guy, right? They're venting again. You love your partner. You care. You care about them so much. But this evening you feel your shoulders tense, your jaw lock. You're getting annoyed. Because you're not resourced, you're not grounded, you're not present, you're not actually available, but they just launched in on it, and you. You nod. You keep chopping.

By the end of the conversation, you're holding your breath, trying to breathe through gritted teeth, trying not to snap. You say, "Mmhmm," and "Oh, wow, that sucks," a few times. Inside, you're counting the seconds until it's over. Later that night, they seem annoyed at you and you're not even sure why. You're lying in bed replaying the whole interaction, wondering if you're a bad partner, if you're selfish for needing space, if they're disappointed in you, if you're a royal F up.

Or maybe, you're the one who had the hard day. Your nervous system is spinning. Ooh, you need to talk it out. So you go to the person you always go to and they give you that polite nod. "Sure. Tell me about it." But something feels off. They're distant, distracted. Not really there. You finish your story and they change the subject. You walk away feeling weirdly ashamed or rejected, even though, by all accounts, you didn't do anything wrong. And that all too familiar little voice inside whispers, "They don't really care. I'm too much." Or, "Fine. Fine. That's fine. I just won't share next time. Okay? Fine."

Oh, such painful routes to go down, right, my love? I think we all know some experience within this realm. And this is what happens when we skip

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conversational consent. Not just physical consent, not just yes or no to touch or sex. I'm talking about emotional, conversational, energetic consent. The kind most of us were never taught to notice, let alone ask for, and let alone given the scripts to know how to ask for.

When we skip that tiny pause, that, "Hey, are you available for this?" We can end up colliding with someone else's capacity. And the fallout, it's not always a big blow up. Most of the time it's something quieter, a subtle rupture, a disconnection that lingers in the air and in the friendship. A tiny seed of resentment, misunderstanding or shame that takes root under the surface and grows.

At its core, asking for consent in conversation means checking in before you offer, ask, advise, analyze, or share. It's a moment of mutual attunement where you say, explicitly or implicitly, "Are you available for this? Do you want this? Do you have capacity?" This kind of check-in is a crucial practice for folks working to overcome our beloved emotional outsourcing habits.

Those codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thought habits that taught us to read the room constantly, anticipate needs, twist ourselves into the just right shape to keep the peace, and offer labor or vulnerability on autopilot without asking, "Is this wanted, needed, welcome?"

When we ask for consent in conversation, we're interrupting that reflex. We're stepping out of assumptions and into mutual agreement. We're saying, "Your nervous system matters here. Mine does too."

So let's talk about the nervous system science behind it, as nerds are wont to do. So this isn't just a nice communication skill. It's a trauma thoughtful, trauma-informed, nervous system respecting relational repair tool. When someone launches into something intense without checking if you're resourced, your nervous system might spike up into sympathetic activation, ye old fight or flight. You might feel overwhelmed, cornered, anxious, biting

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your nails, just not sure what to say, even if you love them and you do want to be there for them, just maybe in 10 minutes.

And if you're not in ventral vagal connection, safe, grounded, open, you might freeze, dissociate, go numb, or mask, pretend you're present while your insides say otherwise. On the flip side, maybe you share something tender and it lands on a partner, a friend, a coworker, a colleague who's shut down or checked out.

Even if they still care deeply, your body might register their nervous system's response as rejection. And that can reactivate old attachment wounds, especially if you've spent your life overgiving in the hope that someone would finally see you, choose you, attune to you. Which is what we tend to do in emotional outsourcing.

My beauty, consent is a regulation practice. It gives both people in a conversational dyad a moment to take a breath. It helps you stay in connection instead of slipping into collapse or conflict thanks to old survival skills. And it's one of the simplest and most powerful ways to build co-regulation in real time, and it's a potent way to live our feminist values.

Meanwhile, most of us didn't grow up seeing this model. I know I sure didn't. Maybe you had a parent who confided adult worries in you when you were eight or 10 or 12. Maybe you were expected to always be available to soothe others, to be the joker, the funny bunny, to take the pressure off. Maybe you learned to equate love with caretaking and had no idea you could say no, or even pause, and still feel belonging, connection, value, worthiness, care.

In white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal cultures, boundaries are often mocked, negated, pathologized, especially for people socialized as women or those living in colonized, racialized, or marginalized bodies. We're taught to be endlessly accessible, emotionally, physically, energetically. So, of course, it feels strange at first to ask, "Hey, are you open to this?" when it's just a conversation. Of course, it lights up the inner critic. Of course, it feels

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vulnerable. Of course, it feels weird at first. Maybe too much? But isn't not doing it way not enough?

Because if we want relationships that are attuned, trauma-aware, respectful of nervous system capacity and desire, right? Because that's the really important feminist note in here. It's not just about, "Can you?" It's, "Do you want to?" So if we want relationships that tick all those boxes, in my opinion, this practice becomes non-negotiable.

Here's the kicker for folks working through emotional outsourcing. We don't ask for what we want in conversation because we think we shouldn't have to. You want support, you want presence, you want care, but instead of saying that, you sigh, you drop a hint, you launch into the story and just hope they'll get it because on some level you expect them to read your mind because you spend all day reading everyone else's.

And when they don't, when they interrupt, try to fix, or give you exactly the thing you didn't want but didn't say you didn't want, you feel hurt. You make it mean something deep and familiar because it touches somewhere deep, old, and familiar. "They don't get me. They don't care. I don't matter."

And that's the emotional outsourcing trap. Outsourcing your emotional needs to others without actually communicating them. And it's generally rooted in very deep history. Maybe you were punished for having needs. Maybe you were told you're too much. Maybe you never got the thing you needed and decided it was better to hope than to risk asking and actually being directly denied.

But here's the hard and friggin annoying truth. Most people cannot read your mind. Even the most loving, attuned partner cannot know exactly what's happening inside your body, your mind, your nervous system with your inner children unless you tell them. Asking someone to read your nervous system without words is not connection. It's surveillance dressed up as intimacy, and it sets everyone up to fail.

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So this is where it all shifts. When you start asking clearly and specifically for the kind of support you want. Yes, it's scary, but clarity is kindness. It gives the people in your life an actual chance to show up in a way that feels good for you and for them. Here's an example. "Hey, do you have room to just listen? Ooh, I had a day and I want to rant without being interrupted and I definitely don't want advice or recommendations, just listening and maybe some little noises here and there so I know you're still on the other end of the phone. Are you available for that?"

That's consent and clarity in action. You're naming what you want, what you don't want, and asking for agreement or consent. You're making a real request, not a demand, not a test. You're just asking.

Some more examples. "Can you sit with me while I feel this? You don't need to fix anything." "I'd love your perspective, but only if you have the capacity." "I want to feel close, but I'm emotionally maxed out. Can we sit together in silence for a little while?" And if that feels terrifying to say any of that out loud, my beauty, of course. That makes perfect sense. This is deep repatterning work, moving from hoping to naming, from assuming to collaborating. And it's one of the most powerful things you can do as you heal emotional outsourcing.

Here are a few moments when a consent check-in can change everything. Before offering feedback, opinions, advice, even if it feels kind or loving to you. Before sharing something vulnerable, before shifting into a heavy or emotional topic, before asking a personal or potentially tender question, before initiating a conversation about conflict or repair, before offering physical touch, especially in heightened moments, and definitely before making it about you.

In all of these moments, asking, checking in, gives everyone space to be the autonomous adult they want to be and to interact and relate interdependently. It builds trust. It signals, "I care about you. I care about your capacity. I want to meet you where you actually are, not where I hope you are." It also says directly, "Here's what I want, here is what I need."

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Please, be direct with me. Tell me honestly, yes or no, so I can take care of myself in the best way for me."

So, let's get deeper into the remedy. I'd like to share a few examples here to get you started. If you want the full list of phrases in every category, you can download the free printable handout at my website BeatrizAlbina.com/327, the numerals 3 and 2 and 7, which is the episode number for this post. This is a handout that was made for the folks in Anchored, my six-month program, and I don't usually share it outside of the program, but it's a really good one. So I'm excited to share it.

Here are a few. Oh, and it's free. It's totally free, printable, absolutely yours to keep and enjoy, and please use. So, here are some examples. Before sharing something personal: "Is it okay if I share something vulnerable right now?" "Can I be honest about what I'm feeling?" Before offering feedback: "Are you open to some feedback or would you rather I just listen?" When checking capacity: "Do you have bandwidth for something kind of heavy?" "Is this a good time to talk about something emotional?"

And two examples for stating your own needs in a conversation. One: "Hey, can you just listen right now? I don't need advice, just presence." And two: "Would it be okay if we kept it surface level today? I'm feeling really tender and I don't want to get into it, but I do just want to connect."

Sometimes, when you ask for consent or state your needs, the answer will be no. And the thing to remember is that's not a failure. It's an invitation. It means the other person feels safe enough to tell you their truth. It means you're building real intimacy, not performance. And if that no feels like rejection, that's okay. Let your inner children feel that. Breathe. Stay present. That moment where you don't spiral and you just notice and you stay present with the feeling, maybe notice it in your body, that's the healing.

Because when you can hear no and not make it mean you're too much or not enough or you messed up, that's when you're reclaiming your worth.

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You're becoming the cake. And if you're new around here and you're, "Wait, what? Cake?" Episode 166 is the one for you.

So my beauty, let's talk kitten steps because this can feel like a lot, and that means you're ready for something different. So here's where you start. Pick one phrase. Just the one. Try it in a low stakes setting. A friend, a sibling, someone who feels safe-ish. And I'll be real with you. Try it with your cat, your dog, your ferret. Try it with a plant. But I'm serious. Just hear yourself saying it out loud starts to shift your belief that you can say it out loud and not die. So pick one phrase and try it out.

Two, track what happens. Notice what arises in your body when you ask for consent or name a need or state a boundary or a limit. Does it feel scary, embarrassing, empowering? Just notice it and track it in your body. What are the sensations that come with it?

Three, celebrate the pause. Even thinking, "Do they have capacity for this?" is a huge shift. That awareness alone is massive. It means you're present in the conversation and not just operating from your old survival skills.

Consent in conversation is vital. It isn't about being precious or overly careful. It's about creating relationships that are rooted in true presence, not performance. If you've spent your life ignoring your nervous system or expecting others to ignore theirs because that's what was modeled or required of you, then it's not your fault.

And now you know better and you can do better. You get to choose something new, starting today. You get to build conversations and relationships that feel safety, softness, spaciousness, where your yes means yes and your no is safe. And the pauses between you are just as sacred as the words you share. That's what real, loving, interdependent, heart-led connection is made of.

Thanks for listening, my love. What a delight to talk about this and so much more with you. I truly hope you're enjoying the show. Thanks for coming

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back. Thanks for sharing it with your friends, your family, your patients, your clients, your colleagues, your cats and dogs. I'm so glad you're here.

My love, 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.

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