

Ep #343: Pet Names That Trigger



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With Your Host

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This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, somatics and nervous system nerd, 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. My sweet, tender, perfect ravioli. You know that flutter of recognition when someone calls you a tender pet name, like sweetheart or dear one, and genuinely means it, like I do, with their whole body, with their whole heart. It's that forgotten whisper that perhaps, just perhaps, just maybe, you, yes, you are already worthy of love exactly as you are.

Imagine that same moment triggers your nervous system like a fire alarm. Not safe, too intimate. Shut it down immediately. Every time I release an episode, I receive these beautiful messages from listeners telling me that being called my angel, mi amor, or yes, my tender ravioli transformed their entire week, maybe even the whole way they relate to themselves. Then I hear it from the folks in Anchored, my six-month program as well. They tell me that they start to hear my voice in their mind, being kind to them when they goose up, reminding them that, of course you did, episode 133 for that tool. And of course, but nothing has gone wrong. There's no problem here. You are just a human, humaning along after all.

And that, my tenderoni, paints a picture of what's possible. Actually being kind to you and it actually leading to massive change. I mean, come on, who would have thunk it? But someone writes to express their discomfort. This language feels too familiar, they say. It's not professional. And of course, my favorite, it's not feminist. Some even suggest it undermines the credibility of the work itself, and I'm anticipating exactly this kind of commentary on my new book, *End Emotional Outsourcing: How to Overcome Your Codependent, Perfectionist, and People-Pleasing Habits*, arriving on September 30th because it's full of pet names, it's full of sweetness.

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I'll start by saying that I understand the discomfort. I get it. It cuts to the quick for so many, and of course, that makes sense. And fully respectfully, I'm not going to stop. Let me tell you why. I speak to you the way I desperately needed someone to speak to me when I was performing for love, contorting myself into whatever shape might make me more acceptable, easier to digest. I speak to you as someone who recognizes your inherent goodness, your essential softness, your fundamental wholeness.

When I say, my beauty, I mean it. Not as empty flattery, but as fierce disruption of the internalized violence that insists you're only valuable when you're producing, pleasing, perfecting. I'm speaking to the beauty that is inherent in your spirit, your essence, your being. The beauty that transcends your socialization and conditioning, your emotional outsourcing, codependent, perfectionist, people-pleasing habits. The way you learned to get by and even thrive despite or because of all you've been through.

I call you my beauty because it's my life's work to see the beauty in all of us, part of the essential human task. And I truly do think that you, my tender ravioli, are profoundly beautiful simply because you exist and were born perfect.

Now, this isn't merely stylistic choice or branding strategy. Come on. This is deliberate nervous system level intervention. What we're engaging in here is what trauma therapists call a corrective emotional experience. The practice of offering what was missing, what was needed, what would have changed everything, had it been available back then. For those of us raised on conditional love, where approval was earned rather than freely given, where criticism and emotional distance were the baseline, being called my love without having earned it can feel profoundly disorienting, even threatening.

When a nervous system has been conditioned to expect that affection always comes with conditions, a performance requirement, an unspoken debt, then unconditional tenderness can register as potentially dangerous,

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gosh, manipulative even. This response is particularly acute for those carrying histories of anxious or avoidant attachment, where love was either inconsistently available or overwhelmingly demanding. For survivors of sexualization or gendered harm, where terms of endearment were weaponized as tools of control, for those trapped in what I call our emotional outsourcing patterns, where safety depends entirely on maintaining others' approval, or simply for anyone existing in a culture that has taught them, as it taught me, that our worth is perpetually conditioned, that we always have to tap dance for our love ability.

But here's another layer that we need to name honestly. For those who grew up in emotionally arid households, families where tenderness was scarce, where emotional expression was discouraged or mocked, where love was demonstrated through criticism disguised as care, this level of warmth that I offer here every week and in every page of my new book, can feel like nails on a chalkboard. It's viscerally uncomfortable in a way that has nothing to do with manipulation or threat and everything to do with unfamiliarity, especially to your nervous system.

If you've spent years being cruel to yourself, if that internal voice has been shaped by harsh parents, dismissive caregivers, or a culture that mistakes coldness for strength, then hearing genuine tenderness can create an almost physical recoil. Like it's too much, too soft, too vulnerable. It doesn't match the emotional temperature you're accustomed to operating within.

Then here's what I want you to understand. That discomfort is information, not instruction. Just because something feels uncomfortable, doesn't mean it's wrong for you. It might mean, just maybe, that it's exactly what you need. That squirmy, resistant feeling when someone offers you unconditional kindness, that's your nervous system encountering something it doesn't recognize, something it wasn't trained to receive. So, when I say something like, you're already worthy, my darling, and your system doesn't believe it, you might experience irritation, shutdown, defensiveness, even contempt. Not because of the words themselves, but

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because they illuminate those tender places where such love wasn't safe or available.

Recently, someone commented that my use of endearments felt unprofessional and also not feminist, suggesting that somehow offering warmth and tenderness and kindness and love undermines the seriousness of this work or contradicts feminist principles. This critique reveals a profound misunderstanding of what feminism actually demands of us. Feminism doesn't require us to be cold, clinical, or emotionally distant to be taken seriously. That's internalized patriarchy disguised as liberation.

True feminist practices include reclaiming tenderness as radical. It means refusing to accept that warmth and intelligence are mutually exclusive, that professionalism requires emotional sterility, and that being taken seriously means abandoning the very qualities, empathy, intuition, nurturing, that patriarchal systems have long devalued. When I speak to you with tenderness, I'm not being unprofessional. I'm being precisely what this healing work demands: someone willing to model the unconditional positive regard that so many of us never received, someone who understands that transformation happens not through harsh criticism or clinical distance, but through the radical act of being seen and loved without prerequisites.

The neuroscience supports this approach entirely. When you hear gentle, loving language, whether from others or from your own voice or my voice in your head, you're activating multiple brain regions simultaneously. Broca's area processes speech production, Wernicke's area handles comprehension, and your auditory cortex receives the sound of kindness. This isn't just pleasant. It's literally rewiring your neural pathways.

Those gentle, kind words get stamped across three processing systems, making them far more likely to stick than harsh self-criticism, which typically runs on the brain's default mode network like a broken record. Every time you hear, my darling tender teddy bear and don't immediately reject it, you're interrupting old patterns of self-criticism or criticism from others and

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are creating space for new neural pathways where tenderness becomes possible, where safety rather than hypervigilance becomes your baseline.

I don't stop when people express discomfort. If being called my sweet squash blossom, my perfect hummingbirds stirs something in you, anger, grief, resistance, rejection, then there is likely some attachment wiring here, nervous system learning that has convinced you that love is dangerous, that being seen is unsafe, likely because it has been, right? And that tenderness must conceal threat because it probably did at some point. And if it simply feels intolerable, like sensory overload, like too much sweetness when you're accustomed to bitter, then your system is telling you it doesn't know how to metabolize kindness yet.

And my beauty, this has nothing to do with your character. There's nothing wrong with you. It's just conditioning. But luckily, conditioning can be changed, but only if we're willing to sit with the discomfort of unfamiliarity long enough for our nervous systems to learn that tenderness does not have to mean danger. Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable in the presence of love. This is some of the most important work we can do because what we resist in others, we're likely rejecting in ourselves.

If someone calling you my tenderness makes your skin crawl, ask yourself, how do you speak to yourself when you make a mistake? What's the tone of your internal voice when you're struggling? How often do you call yourself meanie pants names? Chances are that internal tone is not tender, is not kind, does not give you the grace.

I don't argue with those who object. I don't escalate or defend. I simply continue speaking with love because that's who I am. And I maintain boundaries because that too is part of love. I refuse to modify my authentic expression to accommodate one person's nervous system at the expense of the thousands who write to say, you remind me I'm lovable. You help me remember I'm already enough.

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But let's go deeper here because there's something crucial we need to examine. This tenderness, this warmth, this generous use of endearments, this is how I am. This is my authentic constitution. This is how I move through the world. Because of that ineffable character of being, I've always been a love bunny, always, always. Add to that, I'm a Latina and I'm Argentine. We are love bugs. We give everyone a nickname. Everyone gets a term of endearment, always. This level of emotional expressiveness, this immediate intimacy, this assumption of affection, this is cultural DNA. Así somos. This is how we love, how we connect, how we recognize each other's humanity, especially as people who've been through so much pain. My entire body of work centers on supporting people in stepping into their authenticity, their realness, their unfiltered truth.

So tell me, why would you want me to hide mine away? Why would you ask me to perform a more palatable, sanitized, whitewashed version of myself because my natural way of being triggers your discomfort, when I'm not actually hurting anyone? And here's the deeper question. Often, when we can't tolerate someone else's authenticity, it's because we've been forced to hide our own. When someone's unguarded expression of self makes you squirm, ask yourself, what parts of you have been deemed unacceptable, too much, inappropriate for public consumption? What aspects of your natural temperament have you learned to suppress, moderate, or apologize for?

When you tell me to stop being me because it makes you uncomfortable, and again, not because I'm using hate speech here, right? That's a different conversation. But when you tell me to stop being me because my love makes you uncomfortable, you're asking me, often demanding that I participate in the same self-abandonment that has likely caused you pain. You're asking me to join you in the prison of conditional acceptance, where love comes only when we've made ourselves small enough, quiet enough, appropriate enough to not disturb anyone else's equilibrium, to follow their rules.

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And my sweetest, most loving little fig sandwich, I won't do that. Not because I don't care about your comfort, because of course I do, but because I respect you too much to engage in that kind of codependent dance. I won't abandon my authenticity to manage your nervous system because doing so would rob both of us of the opportunity for real transformation. It would model that love requires self-betrayal, that connection demands we sacrifice our essential nature for the illusion of harmony.

To those who find my tenderness threatening, I see you and I love you. I see the places that learned that love was conditional, dangerous, always accompanied by demands for performance. I see the protective mechanism that insists, if I'm not controlling this interaction, their language, their way of being, their everything, then I will be hurt. I see you. And that too is sacred territory for vital self-work.

And if you want to explore it, I've got hours and hours of podcast episodes, hundreds of tools, and a deep dive coaching program called Anchored that might help. And yes, on September 30th, End Emotional Outsourcing can support you to start shifting away from these painful beliefs. Meanwhile, I won't stop loving you, even if you arrive with defenses raised. Gosh, I mean, especially then. Because in a world where so many of us learned we had to earn kindness, I choose to offer it freely, not because you've proven yourself worthy, but simply because you exist, because you're here, listening, learning, growing, trying.

Every mi amor, every darling, every gentle word is both gift and invitation, an invitation to imagine what it might feel like to be held with such tenderness by your own inner voice, to speak to yourself not as drill sergeant or critic, but as beloved friend, to interrupt the harsh narratives that keep you small and replace them with something revolutionary, unconditional positive self-regard.

This is how we heal. This is how we break generational patterns of emotional scarcity. This is how we teach our nervous systems that love

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doesn't have to hurt, that tenderness isn't weakness, or if it is, that weakness isn't bad, and that being seen doesn't require being perfect. So yes, my darling, my tender little potato pancake, I will continue calling you my love because you are. Not because I know your personal story, but because you're human, because you deserve to be spoken to with kindness, because in this often brutal world, someone should be modeling what it sounds like when love comes without conditions, performance requirements, fine print, even when it ruffles feathers, especially then.

Thank you for joining me, my sweet tender duckling. I want to remind you, if you want more of this kind of love and care and pretty smart analysis, pre-order End Emotional Outsourcing right now. There are magical, amazing pre-order gifts available only until September 30th. Please don't miss out. Unless you hate free presents. Well then, then there you go.

All right, my beauties, 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 BeatrizAlbina.com/somaticswebinar for a free webinar all about it. Have a beautiful day, my darling, and I'll see you next week. Ciao.