

# **Ep #344: The Resentment Equation: A Deep Dive Into Emotional Labor Debt**



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**With Your Host**

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## Ep #344: The Resentment Equation: A Deep Dive Into Emotional Labor Debt

This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, somatics and nervous system nerd, and life coach B  a 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. I want to start today with something that might sound a little, well, a little wild, but stick with me. We're going to go nerd. You ready?

I want to teach you the mathematical formula for resentment. And not just teach it to you, but explain what's actually happening in your nervous system when this equation is playing out in real time in your actual life. Okay, you ready? The formula is this: Unmet needs plus self-abandonment multiplied by time equals rage you cannot explain, AKA resenting the people you love.

Let me break that down. Unmet needs, that's every time you needed rest but pushed through anyway. You needed support but didn't ask for it. "I don't want to be a bother." Every time you needed someone to hear you but stayed quiet. "Don't be a burden." Self-abandonment, that's every yes you said when you meant no. Every boundary you didn't set, every time you prioritized someone else's comfort over your own well-being, your own values. And time, time is the multiplier that turns all of that into a slow-building rage bonfire that seems to come from nowhere but feels like it could burn down everything around you.

Now, if you're thinking, "That's exactly what I've been feeling, but could never put words to," then what a delight. This episode is for you. Or, if your partner, parents, BFF, clients, or other loved one tends to spin in resentment, make sure to stick around so you can understand their brain a little better and can give them more compassion, love, and care. Because what I'm about to explain isn't just theory, it's very nerdy neuroscience. It's what's happening inside your body every single day, especially when you're living from emotional outsourcing and resentment is your habit.

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Let's say your phone buzzes. It's your boss. "Could you handle the Peterson presentation too? I know you're swamped, but you're so good at this stuff." Oof. Your stomach drops like you just went over the peak of a roller coaster made of pure dread and oh my God, you're only in a barrel. You're working 10-hour days, you missed dinner with your kids twice this week, and your partner made that face again this morning. The one that lets you know very clearly that they are drowning too, but they love you and they're trying not to say anything because they know you're barely keeping your head above water.

In that split second, your body knows exactly what it wants to say. It wants to say, "No, I literally cannot take on one more thing and survive." But here you are, your fingers are already typing, "Sure, no problem at all, happy to help, smiley face emoji." And there it is. That cheerful little emoji, the digital equivalent of slapping a smiley face sticker on a garbage fire. In that split second, something fascinating happens. Part of you knows you do not want to do it. You don't have the bandwidth, the capacity, the space, you just don't want to.

Your body sends you a signal that's clearer than a neon sign. Maybe it's a tightness in your chest. Maybe it's a sinking feeling in your stomach like your organs are trying to pack up and move to a different body. Maybe it's tension in your shoulders that feels like you're carrying an invisible backpack full of heavy lead bricks made of other people's problems that are somehow now your problem. That's your nervous system and your body saying, "No. Nope. Nothing. Thank you. Not today, Satan." But your conscious mind overrides it based on years of socialization and conditioning. Your mouth opens and says, "Sure, no problem, totally fine, totally."

And without realizing it, you just created what I call emotional labor debt, which is just like regular debt, except instead of owing money, you owe pieces of your soul to the universe. How's that for melodrama?

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All right, all right, here's how it works. Every time you say yes when you mean no, you're essentially taking out a loan against your future self. You're borrowing energy, time, and emotional capacity that you actually don't have to give in this moment. And just like financial debt, emotional labor debt compounds over time. That small favor you agreed to? It doesn't just cost you the hour it takes to do it. It costs you the sleep you lose thinking about it, the resentment you feel while doing it, the energy you don't have for your own priorities, wants, and needs afterwards, and the growing sense that your needs, they simply don't matter.

Now, I want to get into the nerdy science of what's actually happening here because this is where it gets really interesting. Our nervous system has this incredible surveillance mechanism called neuroception. Neuroception describes how neural circuits distinguish whether situations or people are safe, dangerous, or life-threatening. It's like how you can walk into a room and your body goes, "Oh, that person," right? It's basically like having a paranoid but well-meaning security guard living in your brain stem. Here's the thing: neuroception occurs below the level of consciousness. It doesn't require conscious awareness. Your body is constantly scanning for safety and threat, and it's doing this below the level of your thinking brain. So, it's really like having a background app running 24/7 that's really trying to do nothing more than keep you alive.

So when you say yes, but you mean no, you're creating what researchers call a neurological split. When in a calm state dominated by ventral vagal pathways in the social engagement system, which we've talked about here in detail, neuroception is less likely to reactively trigger defensive states and behaviors. But when you chronically override your body's signals, something shifts.

All right, let me translate that from full nerd for you. When your nervous system feels safe, chill, like it can relax, it's not constantly looking for reasons to absolutely freak out. But when you keep ignoring what your

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body is telling you over and over again, your internal alarm system gets increasingly twitchy and starts treating pretty much everything like a potential threat because you weren't listening when it told you at a whisper. And so your nervous system starts interpreting other people's displeasure as though it were a literal threat to your survival.

And here's why. If you've learned that saying no makes people upset, and people being upset feels dangerous to your system, your sense of self and safety, then their approval becomes like oxygen. You must have it because your body thinks you'll die without it. This brings me to something really important that I want you to understand. All of this isn't just psychological. When you chronically please people, lean on perfectionism, and when codependency is the soup you're swimming in, you're putting your nervous system in a state of chronic threat detection.

Let me explain what's happening with your stress hormones because this gets really specific. Every time you step into the self-abandonment cycle, your body releases the chemicals of sympathetic activation, adrenaline, and eventually cortisol. Chronic stress-induced cortisol creates a loop effect that creates an imbalance between your immune, endocrine, and central nervous systems. Okay, that's cool, but what does this look like in your daily life? Great question.

Maybe you're exhausted all the time. Maybe you feel like you've been hit by a truck that keeps backing up and hitting you again. Maybe you get sick more often than makes sense. Maybe you have digestive issues or sleep problems. Maybe you feel like you're walking around with like this low-level anxiety that you can't quite shake. Almost like there's a smoke alarm going off in the back of your mind that you can't really reach to turn off.

And this leads me to something that most people completely misunderstand when we're talking about resentment. We think it's just an emotional problem, but it's actually a physiological one. Your body is keeping a very detailed ledger of every time you unwittingly abandoned

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yourself. Every yes that should have been a no. Every boundary you didn't set, every limit you blasted through to make someone else happy and every need you pretended not to have. This is exactly why all that advice about just set boundaries or, "Well, just tell them no," often falls so flat. If your nervous system doesn't feel safe saying no, if it's been conditioned to interpret other people's displeasure as a threat to your survival, then trying to set boundaries... beauty, that feels like jumping off a cliff.

And this creates what I call emotional outsourcing, my umbrella term for our codependent perfectionist and people-pleasing habits. You're outsourcing your sense of safety to other people's reactions to you. And if you're living in emotional outsourcing, you're living in this resentment equation every single day. It's part of the gig. And the problem with depending on other people's approval for your sense of safety is that it's like trying to regulate your blood sugar by eating candy all day. You might get temporary hits of feeling safe when people approve of you, but you're creating massive instability in your system in both the short and the long term.

My beauty, your body notices when you abandon yourself. Your memory gets affected, your ability to regulate your emotions get compromised, your immune system starts breaking down from the stress of it all. This is evidence-based. The impacts of stress are well documented.

So let's go back to that equation I started with. Unmet need plus self-abandonment over time equals rage and resentment you cannot explain. That quiet rage building inside you, it's your nervous system saying, "We cannot keep living like this." And the more emotional labor debt you accumulate, the more your system starts to rebel. You might find yourself snapping at people for no apparent reason, like when someone chews too loudly, which is a cardinal sin, and of course you want to throw them into the sun. Of course you do.

You might feel inexplicably angry about small things, like the way someone loads the dishwasher. It becomes a personal affront to your existence. Your



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nervous system is basically jumping up and down trying to get your attention by having you rail at life. But here's what gives me hope. My beauty, you can retrain your nervous system to see your own needs as worthy of attention. You can break this cycle. I know because I did it and I've walked hundreds through the process. So, how do you start? First, you begin to notice. The next time someone asks something of you, orient your nervous system to your surroundings. Gently look around. Just literally just look around and let your nervous system land in this time and place.

Pause. Get present in your body. Find your feet, find the ground. Ask yourself, "What does your body say?" and ask that before your mouth opens. That tightness, that sinking feeling, that's information. That's your nervous system trying to keep you safe against your own conditioning. You don't have to suddenly start saying no to everything. No, no, no.

In this family, in this world, here on *Feminist Wellness*, we take kitten steps. Teeny, teeny, tiny, way smaller than baby steps towards change. So don't try to start saying no to everything because it's not going to work. But you can start acknowledging it. You can start saying, "Let me think about that," instead of immediately agreeing and can set a timer. And I love this because it gives you something concrete. Set an hour timer. Set a four-hour timer, a 24-hour timer. It really doesn't matter.

The point is that you're setting a timer and you're saying, "Self, you matter, and so I'm not going to immediately agree. I'm going to take some time to take stock of me, my wants, my needs. I'm going to check in with this body and rewrite the story of self-prioritization so that I am my own guiding North Star." This is the core of what I write in my book, *End Emotional Outsourcing*, that comes out on September 30th. And it's specifically designed to help folks with emotional outsourcing habits break free from this exact pattern.

When you pre-order the book, you get a set of gorgeous guided journal exercises that walk you through how to get back into alignment with

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yourself. You get a downloadable 45-minute workshop from me to help you come back into alignment with your true self, so you can start trusting your body's signals again and can step out of this painful resentment. Those beautiful gifts are only available during the pre-order period, and on September 30th, they go away, so make sure to grab them now.

My darling, your body has been keeping track of every time you unwittingly abandoned yourself. It's time to start listening, because you don't have to keep accumulating emotional labor debt. You don't have to stay resentful at the people you love. You can start honoring the ledger your body's been keeping all along. And when you do that, something beautiful happens. You become more genuinely available to the people you care about because you're no longer coming from depletion and resentment. You're meeting them with genuine choice and authentic connection. That's what happens when you stop emotional outsourcing, and it's the most beautiful process of self-reclamation.

My beauty, I cannot wait to share my book with you. I hope you'll take a moment to pre-order it now for yourself, for your friends, for your family, for your - the teachers at your kids' schools, your friends at the office. Take a moment to share this message that we don't have to live in the equation of resentment anymore. We can return on home to ourselves.

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