

Ep #31: Communication



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With Your Host

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Most of us have found ourselves in that uh-oh moment when we realize we didn't quite get our point across clearly, that we've been misunderstood or haven't communicated what we wanted to, or how we wanted to. For some of us, this can be a daily occurrence and our thoughts about how these communications go down can leave us feeling disconnected, disappointed, angry, ashamed, unseen, even unloved.

In the first of a three-part miniseries on communication, I'm going to be talking all about how to show up in a loving way when we communicate with others and with ourselves. Get ready for some cognitive behavioral goodness, some psychology, and a touch of the witchy magic woo I know brings you back week after week because it's coming your way, my darling.

You're listening to Feminist Wellness, the only podcast that combines functional medicine, life coaching, and feminism to teach smart women how to reclaim their power and restore their health! Here's your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine Expert, Herbalist and Life Coach, Victoria Albina.

Hello, hello my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. This summer has been a huge one for me, and in fact all of 2019's been like, wow. A lot of change has been happening in my practice and in my life and it's all so exciting. I turned 40, which is super amazing. I brought breathwork meditation to the fore of what I offer to my clients and patients, and through that process have deepened my own relationship to breathwork meditation, which has been just nothing short of earth-shaking and mind-blowing.

And I've been thinking a lot through all of these changes about how I communicate. How I talk about what I do, who I am in the world, and how all of those stories are shaped by my relationship to my inner child, to past me, how I reparent myself now, and the work I've done to release my codependent thinking.

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It's been a lot and I'm so grateful for the opportunity both to do this work for my own life and to share it with all of you. And all of this learning and thinking and growing and musing and journaling and meditating and staring at my navel has led me to want to build on the work we've been doing together here, you and I in the last few months on these big old topics.

So I'm going to be doing a wee multi-part miniseries on communication because it is such a vital issue in our lives. How we communicate and what we think about how we communicate with ourselves and others. It's a juicy topic and I'm so excited to jump on in.

If you're not subscribed to the show, keep listening and open up the podcast app on your phone if you're on an iPhone and hit that subscribe button right up there at the top so you don't miss a single episode. And if you've been enjoying the show, go ahead and rate and review please. It really helps for more people to see it and I'm just so excited to share this with the entire world.

This three-part series is going to be awesome. So before we get rolling, let me give you a quick overview. Today we'll talk a little bit about communication more generally. The forms it can take and the purpose of communication for us as humans. Then we'll look a little bit at the way our communication with others can get complicated, confusing, downright hard.

Next time, we'll look at what it means to communicate with ourselves and then in the last session of this series, we'll explore how the ways that we communicate with ourselves influences how we communicate with and hear others.

Now that we are oriented, let's jump in. So communication, generally speaking, refers to how we pass information to one another and to ourselves through speech, non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions and hand gestures, body posture, writing, and visual

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communication. How we convey messages or ideas through images, like your Instagram feed.

Communication is so much more than just the words that we say. The way we speak, the words we type, what we wear, and the images we project into the world tell a story about us. What we think, what we feel, and what we value. Our stories of course change over time, and our communication is what helps us connect our inside world to the outside world.

Additionally, as pack animals, the way we communicate sameness or difference is important and our communication choices can lead to our feeling more or less connected to others. Part of the group or separate from. So let's pull back here.

Let's say you said something without pausing to be thoughtful about your words, without really stepping into that watcher place. Maybe you reacted instead of responded. And the person you're talking to lets you know that their feelings are hurt. It's so important to recognize that you didn't hurt their feelings any more than they can hurt your feelings because that's simply not possible.

Our thoughts create our feelings and their thought, that was a harmful statement, led them to feel hurt. While holding that as truth, we also get to choose how to show up and take responsibility for the impact our statements have in this world.

If someone tells you that the impact of your words was hurt or harm, you get to choose as an adult, in your emotional adulthood to own that impact. To apologize for it from a sincere, earnest, loving place without making it mean something about you.

Perhaps I'm belaboring this point but I hear this all the time. We say these things without even thinking. He hurt my feelings, or I didn't mean to be

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mean. I feel like such a stupid jerk. You can erase both of those statements from your vernacular, my love. He didn't hurt your feelings. Your interpretation, your thoughts about what he said did.

And there is space for intention to matter. It's important that you didn't mean to be mean, but impact is worth looking at too. Not as a way to beat yourself up, but as a way to learn and grow and show up in this world in your deepest integrity.

For example, if you said something and were told that your comment was centering yourself, or was racist, classist, homophobic, transphobic. You get to pause, to breathe, and to say I hear you that I hurt your feelings with my words, and I apologize for that hurt. I see what I've done, I feel in my heart for you and the hurt that I've caused, and I thank you for sharing your thoughts with me. I appreciate it and I apologize.

And then you get to do your work. You get to sit with what you said and to analyze the privilege, the thought habit, or whatever went into saying what you said, and you get to show up next time from a different – perhaps more enlightened but maybe just more checked in, more clued in, more thoughtful place.

When I was younger, long before I started doing the work of cultivating my own power to have deeper awareness of my thoughts, feeling, and actions, the outcome of my speaking without thinking it through was hearing that someone was hurt by what I said.

And to be real, I was often shocked because I was so out of touch with myself and my intentions, the thinking under my thinking. In reflection, I can see now that my communication wasn't serving the purpose of sharing my story with the world. In my personal discomfort, I would talk to fill the space between me and whomever was around.

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I would talk to sound smart and I'd use big words for no good reason, being that kid. I would talk to forge a connection or to get something I wanted without risking vulnerability by being direct. In my work with clients, those are the types of motivations that tend to come up most frequently as getting in the way of clean, clear, loving, and honest communication.

Trying to appear a certain way to others. Trying to force a connection, and trying to get what we want without really putting ourselves out there. So let's take a look at these motivations and like we've done in other episodes, keep some attention on your body and breath to see if any of these themes resonate for you.

Our bodies have so much wisdom to share with us if we're willing and able to listen. To get in the mood for a little self-reflection, let's do a little breathing exercise together. As always for this, if you're driving, please ignore the following directions or pull on over. We don't need any damage to our wise and powerful bodies or cars while we do this.

Alright my angel, take a comfortable seat. Close your beautiful eyes or simply look down if closing your eyes is not available to you right now. Take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Now, I want you to imagine a point about two feet in front of you, about how far away the average American stands from one another when they talk.

As you breathe in and out, imagine that point about two feet in front of you as a glowing ball of light. Every breath in, you breathe in fresh, clean energy and every breath out, feel and see that ball of light grow stronger and stronger. Do this for a few more times in and out. Now slowly, gently, bring your attention back to your body and when you're ready, flutter open those eyes.

So let's look at the first motivation on our list. Wanting to appear a specific way to other people. We've all been there. Whether we want to look

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sensitive, interested, interesting, like really politically cutting edge, so super smart, or when we adjust our speech, our texts, our Insta pages to project a very specific image that may not be really who we are.

We are in essence denying ourselves. My habit was to repeat something I had heard in an unconscious attempt to sound smart. By trying to sound a specific way, often like my dad, I mean, that's just – I was monkeying him for so many years of my life. I was denying myself and also denying others the opportunity to meet the real me, to see me for who I was and who I am.

Communication should serve to show ourselves, our truest and most authentic selves, to others. Saying something we half understand or only two thirds believe in in order to sound smart or interesting or what have you takes precious time and energy away from our work of getting and staying in touch with who you are at your core.

Check in with your body and breathe. See if this idea of talking to project a specific image of self, does it resonate in your body? In your breath? Check in. No judgment, no criticism, just notice. Is this something you've done or continue to do? That's part of my story for sure.

Now, another common pattern that's sort of like a cousin of the one we just looked at is using communication to try to force a connection with someone else. Feeling disconnected, like we just aren't clicking with someone is uncomfortable, to say the least. Particularly if you're having the thought that it means something less than awesome about you.

So much of being a human is being in relationship with others, and when that isn't happening, anxiety and worry can swoop in quickly to fill in the space left by awkward silence. On a deeper level, when we try to force a connection to get the other person to laugh at our jokes, to respond to our questions, to show interest in us, we are focused outside of ourselves.

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Putting our focus on the other person and trying to make them feel comfortable, or to get them to like us. In these moments, when you can catch yourself, I recommend a three-pronged response. As always, step one is a deep breath, connecting inward. See if your inner child is around. Maybe that little human need a hug or to be told that everything's okay.

Step two, if the situation allows is to find a reason to remove yourself for just a moment. To use the restroom, to respond to a text, to build a quick birdhouse, whatever you can do to politely remove yourself from the situation.

Once you're out of there, the next step is to use some quick thought work, the kind I use with my clients to reorient yourself. Ask yourself, what are you feeling in the moment and what thoughts are underlying those feelings? This work is challenging and it takes practice, but when we can learn to see the situations in our lives with some perspective, we can see where our thoughts are leading us to have a feeling.

Like I want this person to like me, and then we feel anxious, and then we act in a way that may not be in alignment. Because we're trying to convince someone else to find us lovable, to find us gregarious, to find us delightful or charming. We may be having the thought error that it is your job to make other people happy.

To make them laugh, to help them enjoy the party, to help them move into the feeling that you want them to be in. But it's not your job to make other people happy. That's up to them. It also isn't realistic to expect a strong connection with everyone we meet and spend time with. It's also just fine.

So in those moments when you catch yourself talking or typing to try to force a connection, you can start with a deep breath, get some distance from the person or situation, and then you can just do a quick simple evaluation of how your thoughts are informing your feelings and telling you

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that you should be connecting, that you should be loved and lovable, and that something is wrong if the person with whom you're speaking isn't giving you that feedback, that external validation.

While there are obviously so many ways that interpersonal communication can go haywire, the last thing that I want to discuss today is particularly important to me. In part because it's a theme that haunted me for years, but more so because it's one that comes up so much with those of us raised and socialized as women.

As women, we're often told directly and indirectly that we shouldn't speak up for what we want. Sure, you can walk down the street, particularly where I live here in Brooklyn, and you can see like, any number of t-shirts declaring girls rule the world, or feminist baby, or whatever.

But the reality that many women face is that when we speak our minds and come across with strength, we're told to pipe down, told to relax, told that we're being too brash or another B word. Or on the flipside, we're just laughed at and dismissed.

As a coping mechanism, some of us develop the habit of indirect communication. Rather than saying hey babe, can you take out the trash? We find ourselves saying things like, babe, I had a long day, I'm exhausted and I've been doing so much around here while you've been like, sitting around. What are you even doing on your phone? Could you please just take out the garbage?

Ouch. No one wants to be on the receiving end of that form of indirect communication. While out of context, it's easy to say that we would never say those words, but in the moment, when we're stressed or tired, hungry, angry, lonely, nervous about how we'll be received, worried that we need to justify our desires in order for them to be met, or if we're accustomed to using big emotions to get a response, perhaps because as children little

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emotions were not responded to, we can say all sort of things that we would with some distance, never dream of saying.

When we do communicate with those layers of emotional baggage, guilt and resentment piled on to an indirect communication, we are doing nothing wrong for ourselves, our communication, our conversation partner, and absolutely nothing good for the long-term health of your relationship.

This particular communication pattern can feel hard to unravel. I've found that this mode of interpersonal communication, using indirects instead of saying what we want and need directly often has roots in how we talk to and about ourselves. Our topic for next time.

So my love, let's turn our attention back inward and to our breath. Again, if it's safe for you to do so, please close your beautiful eyes and start to settle into a few deep breaths. I want you to go back to the ball of light we pictures earlier in this episode. Imagine that big glowing orb in front of you and take a few more deep breaths.

Notice if the ball of light is any particular color and keep breathing. Is it moving? Is it vibrating? Is it still? If you were to put it in your hands, would it feel heavy or would it feel light? Would it be hot or cold? We do this to get deeply connected into our bodies.

Now I want to invite you to move through the patterns that we looked at today. Communicating to appear a particular way to others, communicating to force a connection, and communicating indirectly. Stay in touch with your body and your breath, feeling any sensations that come up in your body as you bring each of these three concepts into your mind's eye.

I'll repeat them here again. Communicating to appear a particular way to others, communicating to force a connection, and communicating indirectly.

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Did any of these patterns bring up particularly strong sensations? Did your ball of light change, glow, move in any way?

Make a mental note, take a few more deep breaths, and before we come out of this meditation, I want you to check in with your throat. The throat chakra is the seat of communication and a good place to check in to see if your body is trying to communicate with you. Do you feel anything there? Any tightness? Any lightness? Did you find yourself coughing as you thought about communicating? Did you feel the need to sigh deeply?

Just bring your attention. Nothing to judge. Your attention is in fact healing. Give yourself some love, thank yourself for taking a few minutes for this practice, and for the time you spent listening to this podcast. Slowly as you are ready, flutter open your beautiful eyes and come back into the room.

Alright my beautiful angel, I hope that this has been supportive and helpful for you. I hope that in this time together, you've been able to touch into some ways that you may not be thinking about communication in your life. I hope that this framework is helpful.

I hope you'll give the next two episodes a listen because I'm really excited to keep diving into this with you. Alright my loves, please subscribe to the show, rate and review if you're enjoying it, it makes a big difference. Follow me on the Instagrams @victoriaalbinawellness and if you're liking the show, share it with a friend. Share it on Instagram, share it in your communities.

I get all these beautiful DMs from folks who've been sharing the show. Clinicians, I got one from a high school teacher the other day who told her class all about the show. That was really exciting. And yeah, it means a lot to me that you're listening in, that you're enjoying the show, and that you're helping to spread this message of empowerment and the power of really taking charge of our minds, our body, our breath, and supporting our spirit.

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I'm so happy. I always feel so happy at the end of recording a podcast for you. What a beautiful life. Alright my angels, thanks for listening in. Be well and remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Talk to you soon, my angel. Ciao.

Thank you for listening to this week's episode of *Feminist Wellness*. If you like what you've heard, head to VictoriaAlbina.com to learn more.