

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine Expert, and Life Coach, 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 goodness, this is the last episode of 2021, 150th episode of the *Feminist Wellness* podcast. And what a strange and wild ride 2021 has been. So many ups, some downs, whole lot of Covid all around.

I was in New York City the other weekend, right before Omicron took hold, and it was so lovely to see things feeling - we can really problematize the word normal, but to see people out, masked, everyone showing their vaccine cards everywhere, people being for the most part responsible and respectful and thoughtful of public health, but out, and living a life outside their homes again.

And here we are, the time of recording this, the Omicron variant is having its way with New York City, and it's bringing up a lot for me, for all of us, especially I might say for all of us who were in New York City at the start of the pandemic, which was a particularly intense time, last March. March of 2020.

And my hope is that we will continue to move through this, to support the people we love and care about, that we will continue to support our communities so that we can find our way through. I don't have any brilliant words of public health wisdom on this topic other than to say if you're exhausted and depleted and it all feels like a lot and your nervous system needs a break, I want to invite you to give you a break.

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

I want to invite you to take exquisite, loving, gentle, compassionate care of you because it's been a lot. And we stepped into Covid while we were still dealing with a Cheeto. I mean, it's just been a lot.

So love up on yourselves. Give yourselves some gentleness. And I'll be back next week with a show about my take on New Year's resolutions. You know it's not going to be that normal like it's the new day of the new year, change your whole life scene. Not my jam. But we'll talk about that next week.

This week, I wanted to finish up this miniseries about wants and needs. So the past two weeks, we talked about the difference between wants and needs and how this can be a very challenging line for us to walk from our codependent thought habits.

We don't believe that we can meet our needs for ourselves so we expect everyone else to do it for us. And if they don't meet our needs, the internal story goes they've failed us, they don't love us, there's a problem, there's a crisis, there's drama here. And it's probably because we're not lovable enough, right?

Or our picker is broken. I did a show about that not that long ago. Your picker's not broken, darling. You just have conditioned thinking. And this is our topic for today. Not the conditioned thinking. Well, but kind of, but wants and needs in relationships.

Be they romantic, friendship, work, familial, or otherwise. And if you haven't listened to the two shows that come right before this one, 148 and 149, I'll invite you to pop on back to those to set the stage for this one.

All of this matters because when you believe that other people should always be meeting your needs and that you should be meeting theirs,

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

you're setting yourself up for a whole lot of unnecessary suffering when they, those other people who should meet your needs, aren't available or interested in doing exactly what you want them to, when you want them to, and how you want them to, and vice versa.

This whole framework is so disempowering for everyone involved and what a surefire way to end up all sad, lonely, dejected, and resentful, right? And expecting other people to fill our every need does not create closeness or intimacy or true connection.

And that's largely because you believe you're speaking a true need, but it's really a need story, a.k.a a want all dressed up in needs clothing. Because that feels more worthy within our framework, our thoughts about ourselves than just saying this is a want.

So in that moment of expecting someone to, for example, meet your need story for validation by commenting on how amazing your haircut is or what a great job you did, or ooh, that tattoo is beautiful, or to meet your need story for connection by being available to hear about your long day after they've had a long day, well, you're not seeing them in their wholeness while demanding that they see you in yours.

Or that they meet your need story to have the same interests as you when they're interested in different things that they are super excited about. Then you're creating the requirement for lovability to be that they not show up in their authenticity in order for them to meet what you are calling a need so you can feel safe in loving them and being loved.

And that is not just classically codependent, baby, it's not kind. And let's get practical here. It just doesn't work. Because truly loving someone means accepting them for who they are and making the mutually loving choice not

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

to be with them if you can't accept them and if you wish that they were different.

So let's pause and look at how we ended up in this particular quagmire of ours. One, let's go ahead and blame the internet. So meme after meme tells us that we should state our needs in relationship and get them filled by our partners. And if they aren't meeting all of our needs, then well, they suck.

And this is a story that I'm just so not into as you can tell. Two, we learn these thought habits from our families of origin. We often come out of childhood with unrealistic expectations of ourselves and others, especially if we were parentified children, which means that we were asked for a variety of reasons to step into a parental role as a child.

To be a de facto therapist to a parent, to care for younger siblings, while not getting the care that you needed, or if you were never given true independence and were micromanaged or infantilized often well into adulthood by your family of origin for whatever the reason, you may have entered into adulthood without a firm understanding of where you and your responsibilities stop and other peoples' start.

That is, we become adults and we don't really know what's ours to manage and what's just not. So we try to fix everyone and everything. This is a classical codependent thought error that tells us that we cannot meet our own needs and we have to meet everyone else's needs, and they have to meet ours but they'll likely disappoint us.

They're probably not going to do it right. Talk about quagmire. And when we live in this spinning conundrum of a thought cascade for long enough, we learn to distrust ourselves to meet our own needs because we haven't

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

shown ourselves we can. Largely because we're so busy taking care of everyone else's needs.

Quite the cluster cuss, wouldn't you say? Oh goodness, and you know your girl's been there. I've so been there. Three, the unwritten agreement is that I am meeting all your needs, and so I expect you to do the same, even though I never asked you for what I needed and I may be meeting needs you certainly never asked me to fulfill, and you should be grateful for it, right?

We put ourselves out so hard and we expect everyone else to do the same and we resent the shit out of the people we love when they don't. And so we get stuck in this energetic push-pull with people who just can't or won't meet us the way we want them to, people who won't show up for us.

And we get stuck because we're telling this story. We just need them to do x, y, z, and if they only did x, y, z, then we would feel good and safe in the relationship. It's not enough to say I want you to do the dishes. We say I need you to do the dishes and I need you to want to do the dishes.

So we hang on believing that the day will come where they will meet our needs the way we wish our parents had. And we just get more and more stuck, like trying to push our way through quicksand, trying to change people who don't want to be any way other than the way they are.

Four, the thing to always remember because we're always going to find our way back to compassion fast as we can is that when we don't remember how to validate ourselves, we can feel desperate to get external validation.

And when our nervous systems are chronically dysregulated, a want, a desire can feel like a need in our bodies. And when we are in so much dorsal vagus activity, the detached and checked out part of our nervous

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

system, it can feel all kinds of life or death, that someone texts us back or validates us to make us feel safe, wanted, okay, worthy.

And if we tend more towards sympathetic activation, that fight or flight, all revved up, all anxious, it can feel unsafe to let our guard down, to actually ask for what we want, or to allow ourselves to actually feel really safe in the world or with ourselves, so we expect that old mind reading from our loved ones.

And if we're subconsciously blocking ourselves from feeling okay in a relationship, we can get all revved up in the story that our needs aren't being met, and our inner children come out to stomp their little fists and, well, they would stomp their feet, wouldn't they? Stomp their little feet and mash their little fists.

Five, on the note of inner children, many of us had to go it alone emotionally as kids and our inner children are desperate to not do it anymore as adults, to feel sure in our relationships. And that can get conflated with getting our needs met. So validation, for example, can sure feel like a major need when the story is that someone else must fill it for us.

Six, my nerds, I love the work of Helen and Harville Hendrix, two social scientists who work on and study relationships. And their theory is called Imago. And in short, it says that we tend to protect what we didn't get from our parents, caregivers, or other attachment figures onto our partners in an attempt to heal the attachment wounds there, to try to get a different outcome to the story of our lovability.

And so we can unwittingly expect our partners to read our minds and know our preferences and desires without our having to speak them. Expecting them to make us feel okay or lovable by endless affirmation and reassurance.

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

If we have anxious attachment, we can tell the story that we need someone to show up and stop us from having feelings and to distract us from our internal story that we are lonely or unlovable and it will always be this way.

From avoidant attachment, we can go in another direction. We can be so fiercely independent and we don't believe it's okay to ask for support or safe to ask for help.

And so we get into relationships of all sorts and we expect our partners to always be who we say we need them to be. And that can mean trying to control their wants.

A member of the Anchored community was saying that she wants her new boyfriend to be more ambitious. She wants him to want that. She needs him to want that. But he doesn't want that for himself. He's happy with his life and his job as a dog walker, it brings him so much joy. But she believes that she needs him to want to live a different way for her to feel safe.

We also expect our partners to never upset us or trigger us when in fact, safe and loving relationships are the most powerful place to feel triggered, offering us places to heal and grow.

So how does this serve us? Well, it keeps us cozy in our emotional childhood. It keeps us believing it's someone else's job to meet our emotional wants and needs. We can stay in the false comfort of believing that Lassie is coming to save us or rescue us if we fall down the emotional well because then we don't have to take personal responsibility and we can just project all over everyone else.

If it's someone else's job, then we don't have to learn to identify or meet our needs ourselves. But the truth is that we can know and meet our own emotional needs. My beauty, we just lack practice. Not capacity.

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

If we think it's someone else's job to make us happy when we are sad, then we don't learn how to sit in that discomfort or to make ourselves happy without buffering against those feelings.

Our old script says it's their job as my partner, parent, ride-or-die BFF, or boss to see that I am having a challenging feeling or moment and they should step up and fix it for me, which is us giving away our agency and control over our emotional wellness to others.

My darling, co-regulation of our nervous systems, grounding and calming ourselves together is great and vital and important, but what happens when the person you've outsourced your feelings to is unavailable or exhausted or just doesn't feel like it?

We set ourselves up for disappointment. We make other people the boss of our emotions. We lose trust and faith in ourselves and our capacity to handle ourselves by and for ourselves.

And when we get a handle on our emotions, we also know we can handle our needs. When we know that we can meet our own needs, it is easier to ask for what we want because you get out of desperation and you get anchored in yourself and your own capacity to differentiate between wants and needs.

To trust that you can meet your core needs and that you can be flexible around the how, which we talked about in episodes 148 and 149. So it doesn't become that my sense of self is dependent on you doing x, y, or z. I can honor you for you and how you are, and it all becomes about receiving.

I can receive love the way you offer it, accepting you for you, and I can remember that the people in my life are in it for me to love. Not to make me

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

or you feel any kind of way because they just can't do that for us. And it's not loving or kind to expect them to.

For example, my dad Jorge, he's such a character. And the way he shows love and connection is to talk about food. So he'll call and he'll go, "Vic, how you doing? Listen, I made these milanesas," which is this very typical Argentine food, or, "I made this amazing paella, I spent all day in the kitchen. Wow, that was a lot of work but it was delicious."

And that's what he does. He calls me and he talks about food. He doesn't ask a lot about me. It's not what he's available for. This is the way he knows how to connect and I hope you can hear the smile in my voice. Just thinking about a Sunday morning, I'm reading the paper, and the phone rings, it says Jorge on it.

"Hey Vic, I had the best Reuben sandwich, you ever had a Reuben sandwich?" And I'm like, no dad, I lived in New York City for almost a decade, never had a Reuben sandwich. He's just hilarious and amazing.

But when I was younger, I had all these thoughts about the way that he was available to connect with me that made me feel less smiley in my voice. Like, less enchanted with him being him and him being the adorable, hilarious character he is.

And now, from my emotional adulthood, I can choose to say that he's not meeting my needs by not asking about me in all these ways and not connecting, or I can recognize that this is what he has to give. And that he isn't there to meet my needs. He's there to be himself, for me to love him or not.

And I can choose to accept him and to thereby receive love the way it's available from him, with love, and without judgment. Or I can stake my

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

claim and say I need something different and I can demand that a 75-year-old Argentine man be someone else.

But I'm not interested in that anymore. I'm not available for trying to change other people so I can feel a certain way. I'm much more interested in changing my own thoughts and accepting the people I love. And the people I can't accept whose behavior is not in alignment with my values, well, they can see themselves to the door.

So, that was quite the segue into talking about remedies, wasn't it? So I want to invite you to get out pen and paper and start by writing out all of your expectations of your partners, your parents, your children, your best friend, whomever that falls into this category of people I need things from.

For example, you may say that you need your new date to text you back within an hour of you texting them. You may say you need each of your partners to tell you that they love you several times a day. What may be underneath those need stories may be a deep insecurity or a belief that you're not lovable.

We are often telling ourselves that the thing we need, we need from an external source. When in fact, we can get it from ourselves through thought work and somatics.

And so after making that list, you can ask yourself, what of this can I meet for myself and how? And who else can I turn to for support around this desire? And list out as many options as you can think of.

One of the goals is to get really creative with the how of meeting your wants. You remember the ones you're calling needs? Because the more options you have, the less you feel desperate.

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

We, as mammals, do not make good decisions from sympathetic activation, fight or flight, my nerds. The broader our base of support, the better. We are in fact still in the time of Corona, so these could be online groups, friend phone dates, et cetera.

Remembering it's not fair to you or your partner or your best friend to expect any of them to meet all of your wants and your needs. Remember back to those all-or-nothing episodes.

Often when we're telling the story, "My partner never meets my needs," we're coming from that all-or-nothing thinking. So the next step is to look at your own thinking, read through your journal, and run that check.

We do have a penchant for drama from our codependent thinking, so just ask yourself if you're in drama, all-or-nothing thinking, and reality check with your people if you're not sure if your ask is reasonable or loving and okay.

Check in to see if you're projecting your desire to control your story about how something should be onto someone else's behavior. Our brains' negativity bias will lead us to focus on the negative. What we believe we need but we're not getting.

And from our codependent lens, we are so scared to be wrong and bad we will focus on someone else being wrong or bad. We won't look at how we are showing up and we fall once more into that black-or-white thinking. It's either all them or all us. They are either not meeting my needs or I am the worst.

So my beauty, what's the middle path here? Ask yourself, am I looking at both sides of this? Am I looking at the wholeness? Or am I looking for my

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

woundedness? And just looking at the part that is historically easier to look at.

For example, I had a client whose partner was feeling depleted from caregiving and teaching in pandemic life. She asked for more time alone to take care of herself, to regroup and recenter, workout, tend to her spirit.

My client's immediate response was to assume that her own needs would no longer be met because she wasn't in a place of being grounded in meeting her own needs for herself and was overly reliant on her girlfriend to meet her need for connection.

It felt scary for her because she, like so many of us, had become so habituated to her needs not mattering. So that any hint of someone having a need that doesn't align with her preferences took her right on down that thought path that she would - say it with me, my loves - die cold and alone on the mountaintop.

My client was able to pause and breathe and got some clarity through coaching with me in Anchored. She was able to reframe the time apart as an opportunity to meet her own needs without relying on her partner. Like seeing friends, catching up on reading, meditating, and coming to more group coaching calls and dance parties in Anchored.

PS, we have so many dance parties in Anchored and it's such a blast. What often happens in codependent relationships is that we make one person our everything. We assign our joy and our wellness to them. We make them the full stewards of our emotional safety and it sucks for them and for us. It's not kind and it sets us up for a lot of discomfort.

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

Instead, you can learn to anchor yourself in your own deep belief in your lovability and worth and safety and knowing that when you hit a rough patch, you will have your own back, you can meet your needs.

And that you can, from that grounded place, reach out to others for support. Not just your partner or your ride-or-die. Maybe instead of leaning exclusively on one person, you call a friend.

So often in childhood, we learn that the family was this insular unit. Perhaps we were keeping secrets, or our parents weren't emotionally mature. That kind of history can make it easy both to believe that making one person your everything is a great idea, and that you can't meet your needs yourself, which I truly believe you can, my perfect buttercup.

In interdependent relationships, all partners recognize the autonomy of their partners. They see them as fully fledged adults who are just as capable of taking care of themselves and managing their own minds, meeting their own wants and needs on their own as they are.

And from that place of seeing each other in their wholeness and honoring it, they are able to meet one another with mutuality and reciprocity. And from our codependent, people-pleasing habits, we do not go into relationships expecting to be met with love and care.

And instead, we say they aren't meeting my needs when we mean we have different values in a relationship and maybe we aren't the right fit. But I'm scared to say it out loud because then they'll be upset with me. Calling it needs keeps you on that seesaw, making demands, complaining that your needs weren't met, up and down, and up and down you go.

And my beauty, let me be clear here. If a partner is not interested in reciprocity, if you are not being heard, honored, if your requests are

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

chronically unmet or devalued, then that to me is a problem. It's a red flag about the relationship.

And you get to get clear about whether you're talking about your values or your needs. Because when we frame things as needs, as though they require extra gravitas to matter, then we end up feeling more and more attached to attempting to get someone else to validate and meet those needs, to change who they are to meet our needs.

And so because we're so attached in the pendulum of this story, we stay with that person, believing that if we just make our needs seem vital enough, moralistic enough, like something a good person would do enough, then they will change.

Versus, seeing when it's an issue of core values just not being aligned and recognizing that maybe they're just not the person for you. And in so doing, you get to stop struggling in your stories about unmet needs. And you get to move on to meet your own needs in alignment with your own values.

And from there, to connect with partners whose values overlap with yours in new and delightful ways instead of fighting for someone else to change when they're clearly not interested.

And to that end, whether or not your partner shares your exact values, I believe they ought to at a minimum care about and respect what you value. And at least meet you halfway at a minimum.

So in closing, my perfect, magnificent darling angel feather, when you are not meeting your own needs, you will always find an unmet want or need to assign to someone else.

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

You will continue to turn over your agency, your power in your life, and I know that you truly can do it differently by anchoring yourself in you and learning to meet your own needs and to state all of your beautiful wants in alignment with your values, your integrity, and the life that you dream of living for you.

Go out and create it, my beauty. I believe in you. I hope you have a safe and healthy new year. Please hydrate. You know what I'm talking about. Stay hydrated, my people.

And be safe. Wear your mask. Do the things please. You matter. Thank you for joining me. It's been another beautiful year of sharing the podcast with you and I'm so grateful for the opportunity to connect with you all.

If we aren't connected over on social media, connect with me there @victoriaalbinawellness. And if you haven't checked out Anchored, my six-month program, I really, really encourage you to. It is a beautiful collective experience built on the pillars of mind, body, and spirit.

I will teach you the skill of thought work so you can see and change your own habitual thinking. I will teach you all this nerdy science of somatic practices, nervous system work, beautiful amazing polyvagal theory, we'll talk about inner children and protector parts. It's a nerdtastic dream.

And you will get concrete, practical, usable skills that you can apply to change your life somatically from your felt experience of being alive, which supports you in changing your thinking, which supports you in changing your bodily experience.

It's this beautiful cycle of being a living human. And it really truly, for me, my life changed in the most radical ways when I stopped just trying to

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

change my thoughts and learned to listen in to my body and make change from and with and in partnership with my body as well as my mind.

And finally, spirit. We bring in breathwork and meet as a group to practice breathwork, to really connect in with ourselves that way. And then we coach each and every week. You will have countless opportunities to get coached by me in this beautiful collective container built in love and care.

And it's so important. Collective healing is so important. Codependent thinking is so isolating, y'all. It just makes us all feel alone. In our all-or-nothing thinking, in our everyone's out to get us, we're taking everything personally, we need people to read our minds, this whole thing with wants and needs, it's so isolating.

But it doesn't have to be because we can change the thinking, we can change the patterns. We can do it in collective. We can do it in community, all together. And it's so much fun. We dance so much. We tell terrible jokes. We laugh.

We're silly. We're fun. Because baby, what is the point of healing if you're not having fun? So we have fun together. I love it so much and I'd love it if you joined us.

We are about two thirds of the way full going into the new year and we start that second week of February. So if you want to join us, the time to apply really is now so you can get on my calendar for the beginning of the year. Victoriaalbina.com/anchored.

Let's do what we do, my beauties. Gentle hand on your heart if you feel so moved. Remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my darling. I'll talk to you next year. Ciao.

Ep #150: Your Wants & Needs in Relationships

If you've been enjoying the show and learning a ton, it's time to apply it with my expert guidance so you can live life with intention, without the anxiety, overwhelm, and resentment, so you can get unstuck. You're not going to want to miss the opportunity to join my exclusive intimate group coaching program, so head on over to victoriaalbina.com/masterclass to grab your seat now. See you there. It's going to be a good one.