

Ep #166: Be The Cake



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #166: Be The Cake

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. If you are a frequent listener to the show, then you know that I love a good metaphor. And this week is no different.

Today, I want to talk about a saying I came up with some years ago around relationships. And as always, that can mean dating or partnerships, friendships, work-spouse relationship, parent-child, and that is this: I want to invite you to be the cake and to let everyone else in your life be the icing on the perfect cake that is you.

If you are looking for someone else to be the cake, my love, you're likely to be disappointed and permanently chasing someone and something else because no one else can be the cake for you. So what on earth am I talking about?

Well, first, let me say, if you don't like cake, that's fine. Sub in pie or dulce leche, facturas - facturas are Argentine pastry. They're so amazing. Sub in whatever you prefer. Listen to this and say to yourself, be the tender ravioli. You know I love that option.

Honestly, really, I'm more steak than cake, but be the steak doesn't have the same ring to it so here we go with be the cake. So my darling, we often enter into relationships from our codependent and people-pleasing habits with the desire for that other people to fill a gaping hole in our hearts and our lives. The place where our sense of self could be.

Ep #166: Be The Cake

We want them to do and be something for us that we are not doing or being for ourselves first. We are often looking for someone to complete us. To be that magical other half that we are taught we're lacking, which by the way, is just utter BS. You are perfect and whole and magical just as you are, my darling. No one can complete you because you're already complete.

When you are grounded in an embodied sense of self, when you know yourself cognitively, meaning you use thought work, you know your own habitual thought patterns, your attachment style habits, your conditioned ways of being, and when you know yourself somatically, you know the nervous system state your body tends to go to and how you can both regulate yourself and ask for co-regulation from others in a calm and centered way, knowing that you can regulate your nervous system, when you are showing up in your fullest weirdness, your true authenticity, when you're unapologetically you, then you are being the cake.

You know you're utterly delicious. You know you are the prize. You know you are to be cherished and honored and delighted in. And you have space to allow others to be your icing, to honor them and delight in them, and you know in your bones that you, yes you, are the main dessert.

You are the cake to end all cakes. And everyone else is a delightful addition to your life, your day, your world. Not the main attraction. See where we're going here?

When you are looking for someone else to be the cake in your life, you're looking for someone to prove your worth to you. If I date someone tall and handsome or rich and powerful and successful, or a professional llama trainer, then I will feel good about myself. They'll validate me. They will make me feel whole and worthy, worthwhile.

Ep #166: Be The Cake

They'll do the emotional heavy lifting for my sense of sense, for my self-esteem. Then I won't have to because I'll know that they are in the cake role in my life and I can continue to operate from my codependent story that other people need to tell me that I'm important, good enough, lovable, worthy, instead of just knowing it myself, instead of trusting it and believing it.

And we know what that leads to, my darling. Resentment, painful conflict, the self-abandonment cycle, living from our wild and often unvoiced expectations and how-to guides for other humans, episode 20. All of which keep us trapped in our codependent and people-pleasing cycles.

Whenever your internal story is about how someone else can complete you, that is often the root cause of your relational pain and struggle. Asking or demanding and expecting that someone else be the cake, the starring role in your life, that's setting up a real lousy time for you and the other person because no one else can be the cake for you.

And you will never show up as your fullest cake self if you are using the other person to make your life feel more valid. If you're telling the story you complete me, you are setting yourself up to fear losing them. And so you manipulate and control without realizing it.

You people please, you play games, you play at being the person you want them to be and being the person you think they want you to be. Shapeshifting, chameleoning, not being you fully. We show up as not our true selves and we tell the story that our value and worth depends on someone else's approval of us.

All of this begs the question, how do know when you are not being the cake. Well, you are not being the cake when you feel graspy, when you feel that your mental health, wellness, care, depends on someone else. Their

Ep #166: Be The Cake

whims, thoughts, feels about you. When the internal barometer of your okayness is in their hands, you are not being the cake, my love.

Another sign you're not being the cake is when you crave compliments and find yourself fishing for them instead of just knowing you're amazing and trusting it somatically, deep in your body and your mind. Listen, mis amores, I'm a Leo Argentine fem. I'm out here for a compliment and that is not a problem. Compliment my hair. I already know it's fabulous.

If you don't compliment it, that's fine. I may question your judgment and ask you to get your eyes checked, but I'm not going to take it personally. I love a compliment but I don't need it. I love external validation but I don't need it. And because I love it but don't need it, I don't need to manipulate or control other people in any way to get them to say what I want to hear about my looks, my body, my work, my content, my smarts, my anything.

And come on, how often do we make self-derogatory comments to try to get people to turn around and say the thing we want to hear to feel okay? I see you. You are not being the cake when you hint at what you want, or when you're being indirect or passive aggressive, instead of stating your wants and preferences.

We love to hint at what we want instead of saying it. And then we get resentful when we don't get what we didn't ask for. Because we expect the other person to read our mind the way we constantly try to read everyone else's mind so we can attempt to stay one step ahead of their needs because we look at everyone else as our cake.

And then we do the self-abandonment dance once more, and then it sucks for you and everyone in your world when you don't get what you want and you lash out, collapse inward, or spiral into shame and blame, feeling bad about yourself, unappreciated, and rejected.

Ep #166: Be The Cake

Let's zoom out my love, and take a look at some telltale signs of uncakeful living. First up, fishing for compliments instead of just dead-up saying, "Hey babe, tell me I look hot in this." Feeling insecure more than you feel secure and grounded in yourself, and phrasing it that way feels important for me because it's normal, natural, and human to feel insecure here and there. It's all about the balance.

Manipulating and controlling others so you or they get the outcome you think is best. Staying in a relationship with someone when you're not really happy and it doesn't feel so good because you secretly, or not so secretly think you can't do better, or because you think there's something wrong with you.

Demanding attention, not accepting compliments, not receiving love, care, or kindness because you're so outwardly focused. Taking things personally and making things about you from your insecurity, being offended easily or hurt all the time, blowing things out of proportion.

Not taking personal responsibility, a.k.a living in emotional childhood, and blaming others for your emotional state, episodes 22 and 23. Believing and expecting that someone else is going to rescue you from your life, living your life to please others, not allowing yourself to rest, taking up all the air in the room because you're uncomfortable with silence or others being on stage.

People pleasing instead of you pleasing, prioritizing other people's lives, wants, and needs, instead of living from an ethos of mutuality and reciprocity. Hearing all of that, I pretty much just redefined codependent living, didn't I?

It's a most uncakeful way of being. Some examples of cakeful living, and of course, this too is a far from exhaustive list, but first up is living from

Ep #166: Be The Cake

interdependence; the opposite of codependence. Having healthy, loving boundaries that are states, that are flexible, and that are said without guilt or shame.

And you do this for your good and the good of those you love and are in community with. And for more on boundaries, see episode five and 41. When you are living cakefully, you take up an appropriate amount of space in any setting. And I get it when this is new, it can feel really confusing to know what that is, so it's something you really get to feel into from your heart, from your body.

Because when you're cakeful, you don't have to take up tons of space because you don't have to prove anything. You just know you are cakeful and you live it. When you are cakeful, you are emotionally mature, have somatic awareness of yourself and your body, you live with embodiment.

You prioritize your biological impulses and needs, meaning you eat and drink water, and pee when you need to, even if it isn't always convenient for others. You are self-assured and confident, and you give yourself the grace when you don't feel fully self-confident. Because again, that is human and giving ourselves the grace is most cakeful indeed.

You feel the difference in your body between co-regulating with someone else, attuning your nervous systems for the common good, and making someone else responsible for your emotions. When you live in a space of freedom and empowerment, not dependent on others to feel good about yourself, when you know your internal limits.

That is to say, you notice you're irritable, for example, and instead of causing harm, lashing out, grumbling at someone, jabbing at them, you remove yourself from the situation and attend to yourself. And of course, when you don't do that, you give yourself the grace as well and you

Ep #166: Be The Cake

apologize for any harmful or negative impact in the world, which we talked all about in the apologizing mini-series, episodes 72 to 75.

You are accepting of yourself and others just how you all are and don't think others need to change for you or them to be happy. To that end, you don't try to fix others. You don't try to fix your feelings, a.k.a you don't buffer against your feelings, episode 14. Instead, you know how to feel them because you use the tools I teach here every week and in Anchored, where we dive deep into feeling our feelings somatically and learning these tools and we do it for six delightful months because this work takes time, my love.

As your most cakeful self, you are thoughtful of others, loving, and kind, while also knowing that taking care of you, me first, you second, with love, is not a bad and selfish framework for living. It's a mutually beneficial one that cares for everyone in your world because self-care is a form of resentment prevention.

You do let your nervous system rest through conscious distraction, episode 105. You don't martyr yourself to try to gain love, control, approval, or acceptance. You take loving care of yourself and take time, you make the time to do your thought work so you can manage your mind instead of spinning in confusion, drama, overwhelm, stress, and anxiety.

You don't project your worries or concerns onto others. You don't need to second-guess everything. You take others at their word. You trust yourself and your intuition, your discernment, you trust yourself to have your back, and you trust yourself to love yourself and the people in your life unconditionally.

All in all, being cakeful is learning how to regulate your perfect nervous system because so many of these cakeful traits and activities, they're

Ep #166: Be The Cake

challenging when our nervous systems are dysregulated. When we don't know what nervous system state we're in or how to bring ourselves back, which is why I talk so much yes, about thought work, and so much about somatics and the importance of healing our nervous system, which is what we do day after day in Anchored.

I also got to pause here to say, as you know, dear darling listener, I do this show because I lived a very uncakeful life for a very long time. Most of my life, in fact. And to put it elegantly, it sucked. I wanted each new date to be my cake, each new friend, each diploma, each certification, each training course I took, each new city.

And time after time, I was disappointed, dejected, resentful because I didn't realize what I was doing. I wanted someone else to save me from managing my own mind, from feeling my feelings, and processing them through my body, from making my decisions and potentially failing at creating the life I dreamt of.

And it was only once I realized that I was doing all of that, that I was asking others, often demanding that others be my cake for me that I started to turn my life and my health around. That I started to heal my perfect inner children and my digestion and adrenals too. Started to regulate my nervous system and stop looking for others to validate me and prove my worth to me.

That's when my whole life changed for the better in every possible way, when I realized I need to be my cake and started looking to everyone else in my life to be the icing. So let's talk about icing.

Icing is really great. It's extra added deliciousness on an already perfect and dreamy cake. It's really fun to have someone be your icing when you

Ep #166: Be The Cake

just want them to be icing. It's really a lot to try to make someone else your cake.

But when you want them to be icing, everything changes. It's light and fun and easy and sexy when appropriate. When you are the cake and they are the icing, then you are defining you. The partnership isn't defining you, they aren't defining you, which is an important shift for us because we tend to define ourselves by external things like who we're dating, who our friends are, et cetera.

It's so much easier to accept your partner, foibles and all, when they're the icing. Someone to unconditionally love, remember, that is your partner's job, and not someone in your life who's in this role they likely didn't agree to, to complete you and validate you and meet your every desire, or to be the person whose desires you always meet because you're always over-functioning, or if they're someone you want to change so you can be happy and you can feel like an important little fixer.

It's so much easier to unconditionally love them when the relationship isn't carrying the weight of your self-esteem and self-concept, which also means you can stop taking everything so personally and can let others be themselves, the way you can let you be you now.

When you're certain in your cakedom, then you fear conflict less. When something isn't aligned or working for you, it's so much easier to address it because you're not taking it personally. You're not making it about your personhood or their personhood. It's just about the flavor of icing they're being and whether that goes with your current flavor of cakeness.

When you are after them to be the cake, then them being human, a.k.a not being perfect will get right on under your skin. The things that bother you get magnified. The conversation's not just, "Hey baby, please don't leave

Ep #166: Be The Cake

your socks in the living room,” and instead, when you’re asking them to be your cake, their tendency to leave hosiery on the sofa becomes about disrespect, about them not listening to or not loving you, and this whole intense story about you and your worth gets attached.

But when your partner is the icing and you know you’re the cake, then it’s so much easier for it to just be about their socks or the dishes or whatever. And when those little things add up to you not feeling seen, not feeling taken care of, and you’ve reflected inward and you know you’re being the cake, and this just isn’t in alignment anymore, it’s so much easier to walk away.

When you develop the intimate relationship with yourself that allows you to be the cake, your own cake, it allows for a deeper intimacy with others. You have a self-awareness that you can share and bring. You are also free from the stories, the narratives, the shapeshifting and people pleasing that can get in the way of deeper intimacy.

When you’re the cake, you’re your most authentic self and that allows for deeper vulnerability and connection. And listen, a deep rich chocolate ganache cake does not care if you think it’s too fudgy. It’s not sitting around comparing itself to carrot cake.

I mean, and I love carrot cake, don’t get me wrong, but my point is chocolate cake doesn’t care if you don’t like chocolate cake. Because it is self-confident. Not because it needs to write people off. It simply knows that it is a wonderful cake and that you get to have your own preferences.

Chocolate cake knows there’s room for all cakes to be important in the world. And when someone else wants a different cake, that’s all about their own preferences and has nothing to do with you. All cakes have value. All cakes are lovable for the people who love that kind of cake.

Ep #166: Be The Cake

Listen, a gluten-full wheat-based chocolate cake is not trying to hang out with someone with celiac. Chocolate cake doesn't take it personally if you're diabetic or if you just don't like cake. When we are not being the cake and someone we're into or someone we're not even really into much at all breaks up with us, ghosts us after a date, has some criticism of us, doesn't like the way we're doing something, oh my goodness, it feels like the end of time and space.

When you are being the cake, you are emotionally available. You are emotionally generous, you're able to take criticism, you're able to take feedback, and you only want to date people who are emotionally available, can take feedback, and who want to date you.

When you are the cake, you're interested in people who are also the cake in their own lives and who are interested in you being their icing. And from your cakiness, you are not interested in people who are not available for mutuality and reciprocity.

You're out here to hang with folks who can be each other's icing. Cakes know their worth and hang out with people who know it too. I want to share a little example of cakiness in action. I was talking to my friend Jules who is a butch lesbian and we've been talking about this concept together for years.

So I asked her how being the cake has changed her life, and she shared, and I will quote her here. "I thought my being a butch dyke was a problem. That I was unattractive, that my gender presentation was a problem. Society told me in a lot of ways that I was not lovable or attractive. I seldom see myself reflected back to me in our culture, and in fact, sometimes society is openly hostile towards me.

Ep #166: Be The Cake

But when I realized that I was the cake, I was able to believe for myself that I'm attracted, that I'm a catch. It wasn't until I took my life back and really focused on loving myself that I could embrace my reality that I'm hot and desirable no matter what other people think, that it's a gift to date me, to be my friend, to know me. And lo and behold, it turns out there's a whole segment of folks who agree, mostly femmes in Brooklyn, let's be real.

Turns out there's icing out there for a butch lesbian. It's okay that I'm not everyone's flavor and that gives me so much freedom not just in dating, but in life as a whole." Thanks so much for that Jules and thanks for being the cake that you are. I love you buddy. So grateful to know you.

Another amazing story about being the cake and stepping into your cakiness is my client in Anchored, Bethany. She wanted to launch a podcast but was scared about what others would think of her, which of course is normal and human.

And what happens for us from our codependency, our perfectionism, our people pleasing is that we allow that being scared of other people's thoughts to outweigh our doing what we want to for our lives. We let it get in the way of our cakey-ness.

So we coached through this in our weekly Anchored coaching call for several weeks, worked through things like imposter syndrome, caring more about what others think of her than her own opinion. We worked through self-doubt, we did a lot of somatic work with her inner children so they felt comfortable knowing that she would have their backs and wouldn't abandon her if people didn't love her work.

That she would still love up on herself no matter what was the promise she made them. And eventually, her inner children believed her. And she believed her. And she knows now that she is fabulous and amazing and

Ep #166: Be The Cake

has so much to give that she is the cake and she will look to her listeners to be the icing. Nothing more.

Not to prove a darn thing to her because she knows it. And of course, her show is getting rave reviews, of course it is. She's such a cake and she knows it. My beloved, as long as you are in the codependent habit trap, everyone else's opinions and responses to you are grist for the mill of beating yourself up because you're not being your own cake.

So that's the work. To name and celebrate the things that make you the most amazing and delicious cake in the world. And to see where you're making others your cake. To see where you're trying to be the cake for them.

And to pull back and to give yourself the assurance, love, care, kindness, gentleness, compassion, acceptance, and love that makes for cakeful living, and to allow others to be their own cake, to respect them enough to not try to solve their life for them, but to let them figure out what the most perfect expression of their cakey-ness is for them.

And from there, you can let others be your icing and you can show up to unconditionally love the people in your world as their icing. And as your own cake, please do enjoy the icing. Just remember to run a little check the way we always do and ask yourself, are you asking the other person do your emotional work for you?

Because that's a cake's job to do for themselves. Or are you just appreciating being appreciated? And if it's the latter, good for you, my darling. It's so nice to be loved up on, to get some icing, let yourself revel a bit in others' appreciation, knowing that you don't need it to be truly okay and solid with yourself.

Ep #166: Be The Cake

And you can take it in and enjoy it for all the delightful icing-ness that it is, you magnificent cake you. My darling, take some time today to celebrate you. To look at and honor the places where there's growth to be had, where you can shift your habitual stories in mind, body, and spirit, so you can step into more cakefulness.

But please, above all, no blaming, no shaming, no guilt, no feeling bad about not yet being in the fullest expression of your cakey-ness. Honor the places where you are the cake and name the places where you want to grow.

And remember that cake is freaking magical, just like you. And if you're ready to learn the skills and the tools to step into your biggest most favorite cake-y you, then look no further. Anchored, my six-month program is the place to learn how to celebrate and honor you.

The place to learn how to stop looking to others to be the cake for you and to stop trying to be other people's cake so you can take in all the icing that life has to offer. Anchored is a loving, kind community of like-minded humans who are dedicated to doing this work to be their own cake and to allow others to be their own.

The work we do in Anchored is to drop the anxiety, the stress, the overwhelm, and to find our way back to ourselves. To living the interdependent lives we've dreamt of. The lives where we take personal responsibility, have healthy boundaries, and honor our wants, needs, and desires.

And you deserve the kind of loving care, the weekly coaching that you'll get from me live every single week in Anchored, the coaching that you'll get from me over Slack, which is where we have our loving community. We're not on Facebook. We're on Slack.

Ep #166: Be The Cake

And there, you can get coaching from me every single weekday for six months. Yes, you heard that right. Along with breathwork, somatic practices, all sorts of nervous system education. I see that smile on your nerdy face, thinking about learning all about polyvagal theory and nervous system details from me, your fellow nerd.

It's an absolute delight and I'd love to have you join us. Head on over to victoriaalbina.com/anchored to apply now. The group is filling up fast. We're over halfway full at this point and we start in that first week of May. So if you've been curious, if you're interested, apply now. It's such a delight, I cannot wait to share Anchored with you.

Alright my beauty, 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 beautiful cake. I'll talk to you soon.

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.