

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

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. I, myself, am doing spectacularly, thank you for asking. I feel really good. I feel so good in my life, in my love my romantic relationship, my friendships. Oh, I feel deeply satisfied. And that satisfaction has been building over the last several years.

It's been sort of kitten steps of leaving allopathic medicine to start my functional medicine practice, building my life coaching practice within my medicine practice, leaving my emotionally abusive marriage, moving to the Hudson Valley. It's like all these little kitten steps towards living the life I want. I just mentioned the outward things, but what really made the difference was the inward things.

My thoughts, my feels, my somatic or bodily experience of life, that supported me in knowing what I want. Listening to my intuition, trusting my intuition. Believing my discernment when it tells me what the "what" is. And having my own back believing that I'm worthy of good things; which that took a while. That took some time at task, particularly in my marriage.

My partner had a lot of anger issues, temper, there was a lot of gaslighting, and the kind of emotional abuse that leads a gal to really doubt herself. And rebuilding after that was challenging. Come on now. But it has been so beautiful. It's just been so beautiful, to build my trust and faith in me back up.

I'm sharing all of this because you know I love sharing stories of folks finding the other side of a crappy experience. Because when I was deep in

it, I thought I was doomed forever. So, there's that. But there's also, the other reason to share it, is because I got a listener question that is effectively about this, it's about dissatisfaction in life. And I'm really excited to talk about how we can find satisfaction and make that move from chronically ugh with the world to... I wake up giggling every day.

I'm not out here being like, "You should wake up giggling." But I am, I did a DNA test, 50% cartoon character and 50% bunny. So, I'm silly, right? I'm a joy bunny. And it's my way, it's my constitution, and it's also an active choice I make every single day to find the joyful, to revel in it, to celebrate it, to be in it. I do that because it feels damn good.

But also, because I've seen my own shadow. I've been deeply, deep dark hole depressed and anxious. And I don't want to go back there because it sucked. It sucked. And so, for me constantly choosing the joyful outlook, to take things easy, to not get upset... Not in a negating way, eww come on, but to not bother getting upset, it has been life changing.

So, I want to talk about it. And before we dive in, I want to say first, a note about Anchored. Anchored is my six-month program. It is a small, intimate community of humans socialized as women. There are several offerings a week where you can come together with the community. There's live coaching, there's dance parties, there's somatic movement clinics, there's meditation; we have two different meditation teachers who come in.

There's breathwork every single month. We do a lot to support ourselves, to overcome our codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thinking, habits, ways of being and nervous system settings. So, we work with the mind, the body, and the spirit in this gorgeous container that truly does become a family. Where we support each other around breakups, around new jobs, around leaving jobs, around having a kid around, not knowing how to parent.

We celebrate each other, we support each other, and we have each other's backs. And through that process of really being loved and cherished in this community, while having my expert coaching and the coaching of several beautiful, incredible guest coaches, we retrain our nervous systems. We retrain our minds. We learn to regulate our nervous systems and how to hold space so that our nervous systems can be dysregulated and we can learn from them in a safe way. That's the nervous system healing.

So, in Anchored we don't just cover up what's going on in our nervous systems with some big deep breaths. Instead, we actually do the work of healing our nervous systems. And it's incredible. And it's powerful. And it has the culmination of 20 years of training in nervous system science, polyvagal theory, somatic experiencing.

I am a Master Certified Life Coach and I take this really seriously. It's a big deal, important work. It has wildly changed my life and the lives of the hundreds of women who have come through Anchored.

The June 2023 cohort is likely to be the last cohort in this calendar year. And potentially, until probably late spring, summer, potentially even the fall of 2024. I'm cooking up some other stuff. Anchored will always be my baby. I'm really excited about it, and I'm excited to share it with you all. We're going to be taking a hiatus for potentially up to a year.

So, if you've been listening to the show, if you've been learning from it, growing, you're loving my workshops, my webinars, everything I'm putting out there. If in your heart, there's a voice that says, "That is the tender ravioli for me. That is the combination of tough New Yorker who's going to tell you how it is and sweet, little, tender bunny, who will just love you and hold you and cherish you in your tenderness, here I am. Here's Anchored.

This is the last chance to do it for quite a while. So, don't sleep on it. Check it out. Join us today, VictoriaAlbina.com/anchored. Okay, I needed to get

that out there. It's incredibly important to me. I want this class to be really full of the folks who have been thinking about it for quite a while. And who are like, "Oh, I don't know, maybe next time, maybe next time." This is it. This is the time. Okay, I'm going to hush. I could talk about Anchored for hours because I love it so much. And there's more to say.

So, before we dive in, again... I want to say this clearly, this state of chronic dissatisfaction we're going to discuss, can be a moment you're moving through. And it can be secondary to a number of causes beyond just mindset. It can also point to, if we're going to get diagnostic, dysthymia, dysphoria, depression. So, to be clear, as always, this is a podcast. It's like 30-ish minutes of my thoughts on an issue.

It is *not* diagnostic nor a substitute for proper licensed mental health care. So, if you feel chronically dissatisfied in life and for realsies, can't shift it, can't shake it, and all the suggestions here are for naught, that's a great indication that putting your head together with a licensed mental health practitioner, such as a therapist, could be a great idea. If for nothing else, just to see what the "what" is, because safety first, my darlings. And you deserve vibrant and amazing mental health.

Our fair listener wrote in saying, that she tried to do all the things to make her partner happy and nothing worked. Her partner was, in her words, chronically dissatisfied. Nothing was ever good enough, enough enough. The thing she needed or wanted, she always saw the negative, the problem, and focused there. And made her displeasure known.

She always felt, in each new job there was someone who didn't like her, there was a bully, there was someone who treated her poorly. Everywhere, across several states and different sort of fields of work. There was always someone, there was always something that kept her from being satisfied.

And this is what scientists would call a "not-cute situation" for both partners, right? Seriously, though, nobody is loving this situation. Neither the one trying way too hard... Let's do a whole other podcast on that. On seeing that your partner is chronically dissatisfied and then going into hyperdrive to fix it.

Today we're going to focus on the person who is seemingly unable to receive the attempts to make her happy. It's a challenging situation, for sure. And it is all too common in relationships where emotional outsourcing is the norm.

For those of you who are new around here, hello, welcome. I'm glad you're here. Emotional outsourcing is the term we use as an umbrella term for codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thought habits. Where we define codependency as chronically and habitually sourcing our sense of worth, value, and safety from everyone and everything outside of ourselves. Right?

So, we don't feel safe or good or okay within ourselves. We look outside for others to make us feel better. And when that's what we're doing, when it's one person relationship, particularly when it's both, it is just such a recipe for a really challenging time.

Okay, so let's do what we do here on the show. We're going to start with the question, whyfor? And then, we're going to head into some remedies. So, why do so many people find themselves feeling chronically dissatisfied with life? And how are we possibly feeding the state of being without even realizing.

Let's start macro. We live in a culture that values constant improvement and achievement, production, productivity, doing over being; as we discussed, way back in the day, in Episode 21 "You're a Human Being Not a Human Doing". We are bombarded with messages that we need to be

better, smarter, faster, and more successful per societal norms. Which can leave a human feeling less than, like an F-up, and like life is just letting them down, regardless of what it looks like on the outside.

And when we're measuring ourselves against other people's standards or goals for life, we can get stuck and compare and despair; which we covered in Episode 66. It feels like every day, in Anchored, someone shares that she feels like she's not healing fast enough, not getting better in the right or quick enough way.

That she's frustrated by what feels like setbacks in her growth, based on some story in her mind about what human healing should look like. All of which leaves her dissatisfied with how far she has actually come.

And every time someone brings this to coaching, everyone else in the Anchored familia, all of my little sailors, are like, "Oh my God, you've grown so much in such a short time," like, every single time. So, I just want to bring up how common this is.

To say that, in some ways, my darling, it's not you. It's your conditioning in the patriarchy, white settler colonialism, late-stage capitalism. We have come to think this way, to have this "I'm behind the eight ball. I'm not satisfied with myself and my life" story. Because there's so much out there pushing us to believe that achievement is what defines us.

And, as is common with mammals, this sort of story can also be your nervous system trying to protect you, as it's wont to do. Many of us have experienced stress, distress, trauma, or simply difficult life experiences, that have left us feeling unsafe and uncertain in general, in life. Feeling happy, safe, joyful, satisfied in life can feel really challenging when those emotions have been coupled or tied up with disappointment or upset in the past.

For example, for those of us who grew up with emotionally immature parents, we weren't always sure what mood or energy we'd be met with from moment to moment. And that trained our nervous systems to be on guard, to be vigilant. We talked about this in detail, in Episode 167 "Emotionally Immature Parents". So, listen to that one after, if you want more detail.

But I bring it up to say, feeling safe may not be what feels safe for many of us, right? When we've been hurt before, it can seem logical, both to our minds and nervous systems, to cling to feelings of dissatisfaction as a way of attempting to protect ourselves from the possibility of further pain or disappointment.

Though, of course, spoiler alert, we're just creating more disappointment and ouch in our lives by expecting life to suck. Without meaning to we double down on our brain's negativity bias and create the poop sandwich scenario we're trying to avoid, by being the character we know and refer to, in Español, as "Oscar, II grouch". I'll translate that; Oscar the Grouch. You think that your grouching is keeping you safe, it is not. And I get why you feel that way, I used to too.

So, I want to invite you to remember, when we experience something that feels uncomfortable or threatening, for example, things going well or a partner going out or their way for us, which is something we might not be used to and don't know how to receive and accept and integrate, our nervous systems can go into overdrive releasing hormones, adrenaline, cortisol, stress hormones that put us into fight or flight.

And those hormones, ooph, they feel like crap; anxious, tense, on edge. It can make it difficult to relax and to enjoy the moment. And so, we feel even more dissatisfied.

Because not only is the moment our partner does something wonderful for us, for example, uncomfortable to start with, because of our history and our nervous system settings, but then we get jacked on endogenous freakout juice. And then we feel doubly crappy, often get snappy, and want the other person to know just how displeased we are with this totally terrible thing they did; which was being kind to us, and trying to be nice to us. Do you see what just a cluster-cuss this whole thing is? Sigh.

Over time, this chronic state of dissatisfaction can have a negative impact on our relationships and our overall wellbeing as we continue to tell the story that life is just not satisfactory. Thus, we believe it every time more and more, in our mind and body. From that story, that life and the people in it are generally doing us wrong or not measuring up, we may find ourselves criticizing our partners, our friends, strangers on the street, coworkers, jobs, bosses, institutions on and on.

We may find ourselves feeling irritable or angry for no apparent reason. Complaining and seeing the negative as a baseline state. And commonly, in a bit of chicken and egg, struggling with feelings of depression or anxiety. Which leads to more dissatisfaction. It's also fueled by the stories that life is overall not really much good. Woof! Challenging all around.

And as always, around here, the good news is that there is hope. That with thought work and somatic practices to help you center and ground yourself to change your way of thinking, change your mindset, change your nervous system setting, things can change. I am living proof.

You can start to get curious about why this negativity bias is the lens you have on life, right now, and the ways you may be unwittingly... Listen to me, unwittingly. No one's casting blame. But you may be doing it, right? You may be strengthening this habit. And in that process, you can get curious about what in your life you might actually want to have be different.

I know that I felt chronically dissatisfied in a relationship that was just not good for me. And that nagging feeling, like something was generally off, led me to dive deep into a whole host of healing practices that have reshaped my life in so many magical ways.

For me, the dissatisfaction wasn't chronic yet, but rather, was an acute clarion call to change, my mind-body screaming, "Get out!" And I'm so glad I was able to be my own watcher enough to recognize what was going on. Before that negative-Nancy habit became more solidified in me. Before it became chronic.

So, let's look at some of the common ways we feed the habit of chronic dissatisfaction, this mindset of seeing the poopoo in everything. First step, of course, is codependent thinking. Putting everyone and everything ahead of ourselves, sucks. And feeling like we have to do that to be loved and lovable, ooph, that can lead life to feel pretty darn garbagy.

It's completely logical, and makes so much sense to me, that when we spend life only feeling worthy of love or care when we are performing our lovability, we never truly rest or relax into life. And yeah, of course, life feels unsatisfactory. Of course, it does. We're not living for ourselves.

And that, of course, is a perfect segue into perfectionism. If you're constantly striving for some fantasy level story about what "perfect" is, connected with a story that says that you have to be perfect. Then, my love, you're setting yourself up to feel dissatisfied with yourself, your partner, your parakeet, everyone and everything that isn't 110% perfect by your exacting and controlling standards. Right? No one and nothing is good enough when your mindset is set to perfectionism, and self-judgment and self-doubt are your norm.

People pleasing is a tidy one to add in here, because it's both of the above in one. "I have to be perfect, and have others see me as perfect and be

pleased with me. And maybe, I also have to be the martyr, the Savior, the saint, the fixer, in order to be loved. I know better than to give pleasing myself any value if I'm not pleasing others first."

Oh, wait a second. Did you hear that out loud? Pleasing others is more important than pleasing yourself, so how can you possibly be satisfied in your life if you're putting your own pleasure last, right? At the core of these, of course, is the question, the central issue in emotional outsourcing, which is worthiness and not thinking yourself worthy of good things. Not believing that it's okay for you to be satisfied in life or to live the life you dream of.

So, even when things are just like pretty darn good, your mind-body has a hard time believing it's okay for you to have nice things. You sabotage the experience of it by saying it's less than you thought it would be, isn't as good as expected, doesn't make you happy or fulfill you. Low self-worth is, today's magic word, a cluster-cuss, isn't it?

And this next one is sort of the secondary effect of the above, which is not celebrating yourself. In both of my programs, Anchored, my six-month somatic coaching, breathwork, deep-dive program that we talked about earlier. And The Somatic Studio, which is my 12-week somatics-focused offering. Coaching is not the focus in there. If you want my coaching, come to Anchored.

But anyway, one of the huge things we do in both programs is we celebrate ourselves and we do it often. We like to say, ABC (Always Be Celebrating). And it's often wicked uncomfortable for folks to get into the habit of celebrating themselves. And that's okay. We use ABC to build new neural pathways that say, "I'm good, I'm okay, I'm worth celebrating." And that's vital and dissatisfaction is your norm.

And finally, though, this is not an exhaustive list at all, but trying to keep this podcast under six hours; not allowing ourselves to be present. Present

moment awareness, or mindfulness, goes hand in hand with celebrating ourselves and living a satisfying life. It's a thing we tend to avoid when the pants we frequent are grumpy ones, because sitting still wigs the nervous system out when it's hypervigilant to possible disappointment.

When it's habituated to being dysregulated and expecting things to be lousy, well, then your mind-body might really not want you to sit still and be present to yourself, the moment, your life. So, you stay busy doing, doing, doing, jumping from project to project. Never being satisfied at a job, in a relationship, etc. And so, you jump.

From there, folks tend to either set massive long-term goals, the working towards which, that wasn't exactly English, but we're going to go with it. The working towards, which keeps you out of the present moment, out of the here and now. Or alternately, you don't set goals. And instead tend to flitter from thing to thing believing that changing your situation, circumstance, job, town, friends, relationships, will bring you the satisfaction you crave.

Or maybe you're a third habit haver, which is that you have just pushed yourself to not be present for so long that buffering is your norm now; buffering is just what you do. You find yourself devoid of motivation, couching it with a bucket of hummus, watching the Gilmore Girls night after night. No longer being an active participant in your life, in your relationship in your future. You're just floating along, feeling like it's all lousy anyway, so why bother? Right? Ooph! So much.

And again, what is so important to remember is that this is not a permanent state of being, this curmudgeonly grumpy-roniness. I mean, it doesn't have to be if you don't want it to be, is what I'm saying. You can make choices to begin to find new ways to experience life.

Now, again, like we talked about in Episode 190 "When It's Not Just Your Thoughts", sometimes we need more than just a mindset change, more than just somatic practices. Sometimes we need to also change our nutrition, movement, exercise, routine sleep, alcohol intake, et cetera.

Changing our mindset is an important part of holistic healing, and there is more to think about. So today, we're going to focus on remedies. Head back to that Episode 190, if you want some reminders on the other things that are important for living a satisfied life, a life you are satisfied with. So here are some ways to move towards that life, in no particular order. I'm not saying one is more better than another.

One, this one's a kind of gimme for me, but work to heal your emotional outsourcing and to reconnect with your inner authority with a part of you that knows that you deserve nice things. It's okay to find satisfaction and even joy in your life. So, there's about 200-some odd episodes in which I teach you all about how to do that. That is the work we do in depth, in Anchored.

Allow yourself to be held, to be guided, to be coached, to do this work. It is really hard to see the soup you're swimming in when you're swimming in it. Work to unravel your emotional outsourcing. It really will change your life to live with a vision of interdependence and not codependence.

Two, broaden your view. When we let ourselves fixate on what isn't awesome, we lose sight of everything that is good enough or okay or even, dare I say it, dope. You might need the kitten step towards that shift and that's okay. Give your nervous system the support and regulating it needs, to allow some good in, a little at a time, and to feel safe enough with it.

Three, drop the compare-and-despair. Listen, I get it. I live here, too. I might be half a cartoon character, but I don't actually live on a cloud. I live here in this world. Where my friends call and they're like... Less and less

these days, since I surround myself with people who don't do this. But in my 20s and 30s, "Oh my God, did you hear that so-and-so is dating soand-so? So-and-so got married? So-and-so got this amazing job? So-andso went to grad school?" etc. I get it.

When your mind starts to go to there, I want to invite you to pause, to breathe, to come back to center, in your body. And if trauma keeps you from going in, orient to your surroundings. And remind yourself that you don't gain a darn thing comparing your apples to anyone else's oranges. I promise you, it's no good for you or for the universe, and it doesn't lead to the kind of loving camaraderie; yeah, that Sara Fisk and I talked about on last week's show, right?

Comparing leads to resentment and competition, and it leads us to see others as having more or better than us. When they really, really, just have different.

Four, self-worth. Valuing yourself is so vital and key here. And that work needs to happen in our nervous system, our bodies, and our minds. Not just in one of those systems, if it is to stick, to land, to really lead to change. When you value yourself and know that you're worthy of good things, you start to see the good around you.

And that's part of how the science of gratitude practices work. And yes, gratitude practices, that's an evidence-based way to improve your happiness. Life takes shape around the things we put our attention on. Challenge yourself to find one thing today that doesn't completely suck.

Once that feels like a doable practice, in a little while, find one thing that feels pretty darn okay enough, right? You see what we're doing? We're kitten stepping. Slowly building up the capacity in your nervous system to stay with things being potentially, maybe, okay enough, and then satisfying.

On the road to them being really friggin' great, which I've got to tell you, once again, that feels amazing.

Five, along with that practice, hold compassionate space for the part of you that blames, shames, and judges you. When those voices come up, ask yourself questions like: What lousy thing am I believing about myself, others, the world, in this moment? And how does that belief impact me and my lived experience?

Take a breath. Feel into or around your body. Get present with yourself and ask yourself in earnest: If you want to keep feeling the way you do, when you think that way? Does it actually feel good, supportive? Does it feel super lousy? Start to use the think-feel-act cycle skills you've been learning here. What we master, in Anchored, to start to change that mental script up. Believe me, it changes everything.

Six, ask yourself, and again, this is an earnest: What does it do for you to not be satisfied? To always see the gloom and doom? One of the things I know for sure is this, humans don't do things that don't serve us somehow. We're smarter than that. Also, biochemically, we're not going to waste calories doing dumb stuff like seeing the negative, if we haven't learned that that's part of our survival. Right?

So, ask yourself, for realsies: How has keeping yourself from joy served you? How has it protected your tenderoni heart? How has it kept you from living a good life? And the answer is not, "It hasn't," I'm saying it has. So, how has it kept you from feeling joy?

Because, God, I dated someone moons ago, who's like, mom got them a puppy and then the dad came home... And she was obsessed with the puppy, loved the puppy. Had a week of loving the dog. And then the dad, who had been traveling, came home and he'd lost his mind about it and

gave the puppy to a shelter. So, six-year-old her started telling the story that positive things end, and end tragically. And we have no control. Right?

So, how? What is the story in your own heart that is keeping you from seeing things as satisfactory, as joyful? That work is important. Let's start doing it.

You can also ask yourself, is this lens, that you have on the world, flagging something that needs to change in your life? Are you actually unhappy in your career, job, relationship, friendships? Or have you changed all those things and you're still unhappy? Get clear on that. Right?

Because that's when the call is coming from inside the house. When you made the changes and still not finding your joy. You know what, my love? When the call is coming from inside the house, you deserve to pick up the phone and change your life. You truly do.

I could talk about this forever. It has been such a theme in my own life, in the work I do. It's such a huge part of emotional outsourcing. And I'm going to pause for today, because once again, nobody wants to listen to a 75hour podcast; which is what this would turn into.

I'll close by reminding you, that ultimately, the key to breaking free from chronic dissatisfaction is to recognize that we have the power to choose how we respond to our thoughts and feelings. We have the power to shift our somatic or bodily experience of life to be one that serves us in living life the way we want to live it. As our whole adult selves, and not just our hurt and hurting in our children.

We don't have to stay in the story that keeps us feeling perma-stuck in doom and gloom. Telling the story that it's cute or edgy or whatever, to be Daria. When really, it's that we're scared to be a Care Bear. I get it. And

maybe, just maybe, life is really friggin' amazing when you're happy and content and satisfied in life. You know, or whatever.

By learning to cultivate a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the good things in our lives. And by developing a greater sense of self awareness and self-compassion, we can start to shift away from painful, harmful, negative patterns to live a more fulfilling and satisfying life, if you're into that kind of thing.

And you're showing up to listen to me, pure bunny, Care Bear cartoon character, so you probably are, maybe. Or maybe you're just mildly to moderately available for it. However, whatever keeps you coming back, I'm glad you're here, my love.

My own life is so much more better these days. And I know that it's all this work, all the thought work, all the somatic work, all the breath work; it's cumulative. And I just can't tell you how grateful and joyful and satisfied I am now. And the me who felt like a sad rock at the back of a cave for years, she wouldn't even recognize me. And that's pretty cool. It's pretty cool.

So, I hope this episode has been helpful and supportive for you. Thanks for tuning in. I'm so grateful. Take a moment check out Anchored: VictoriaAlbina.com/Anchored. I'm excited to have you join us. It'll be a bummer to not run Anchored for a year. But the other projects I have going are extremely exciting, and I can't wait to share those with you too. Ahh, all good things, right? All good things.

Alright, my beauties, let's do what we do. A 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.

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!