

Ep #239: Shame Work: The “Armor” of Emotional Outsourcing with Andrea Owen



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

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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.

Victoria Albina: Hello, hello, my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. This week on the show, we are in conversation with author, coach, and just all-around badass Andrea Owen. We had so much fun. This was one of those conversations where I got to the end and I was like, “I'm not quite sure what we talked about. But I know that we had so much fun.”

Andrea and I are a lot of alike, in a lot of ways, and really different in a lot of ways, that makes conversing with her a real delight. I'm so excited to share this convo with you.

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It helps people to find the show. This is my way of giving back. It's a free resource that I share with the world, and the more ratings and reviews the show has, the more the world finds it. So, I'd love your help. Thank you. Thank you in advance, you tender ravioli, you. My perfect sweet pea. All right. Without further ado, Andrea Owen.

Andrea Owen: I used to vote Republican and made a switch.

Victoria: Tell me about the switch?

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Andrea: Well, it happened around 2009. To be fair, I was always a terrible Republican, because I always was pro-choice and always believed gay people should be able to get married. So, I was like, what else is there? I didn't care either way about guns. It was mostly just patriotism, and a lot of it came after 9/11 and that whole deal. in it.

My family of origin was mostly politically unconscious. I don't even know if they even voted, working middle class. Then, I started dating someone when I was 17; he ended up being my first husband. But his family was very conservative and outspoken, and had Fox News on all the time. They would talk about it. So, I was impressionable, loved them and trusted them, and was easily swayed in that direction.

It wasn't until I kind of shut up for a minute and started paying attention to other people's experiences. What really was the deal breaker, and no one's going to be shocked, I took a Women's Studies class in college. Because I had to and it fit into my schedule. The title of the class was “Men and Masculinity.”

I sat that in that class, listened, and probably didn't talk; more than in any class that I had ever been in. For the first time, I realized that the thing I had been so enraged about my whole life around the cat-calling, around not being taken seriously, all of those things had a name. It was patriarchy, and misogyny and racism. I was like, “Oh my god. Am I a feminist and I have been the whole time?”

In all seriousness, it unraveled me. My whole identity had to be sort of undone and rebuilt. It took me a couple of years to really find my footing and really understand what was important to me. But yeah, I mean, I had been one all along. It was the proximity to white men, and the kind of “pick me” stuff, and just that being close to power is what I was craving.

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That's what I was leaning into, back then.

Victoria: I mean, it can sure give a girl a sense of being in control, right? Or having some modicum of control, belonging, significance.

Andrea: Yeah, I understand both sides. I understand why so many white women voted for Trump in 2016, and even in 2020. I understand their reasoning.

Victoria: Yeah, that's really interesting. And it's really interesting given the work you do now. Which I think of just such powerfully feminist, egalitarian; like, your politics. You're really dope to me.

Andrea: Yeah, I mean, I still have my hang ups, and it's not perfect by any means. I still have unconscious biases that I'm continuously unpacking.

Victoria: We all do.

Andrea: But yeah, it's an interesting perspective that I hold, to be able to hold both of those things simultaneously.

Victoria: It's interesting. Yeah, it's an interesting kind of code shift. I don't meet folks who have crossed the aisle, as it were, that often.

Andrea: And I live in a small town in rural North Carolina now, so I'm mostly surrounded by conservatives who they assume that I am, as well. So, it's always an interesting and tricky situation. I just had lunch with one of the PTA moms. I really liked her. We were having lunch on my birthday, and she started saying how she might want to move back to the West Coast; because we're both from the West Coast.

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She's like, “But I can't stand what Gavin Newsom is doing California.” And I said, “Well, actually, I'm a Democrat.” Her face! It was betrayed.

Victoria: Oh, no.

Andrea: It's always awkward, and sad to be honest. Because it's hard for me to find friends out here.

Victoria: I bet. Yep. I can imagine that's challenging. I have very consciously stuck to my liberal bubble, for the most part.

Andrea: Yeah. It is interesting though, to hear people's perspective. At the end of the day, I think especially because I am surrounded... I am a mom... and I'm surrounded by a lot of other white moms. We all want the same thing, in terms of like motherhood, to protect our kids, but we go about it in very different ways. And we understand that “protection” looks different.

Victoria: Right. Some might want to get rid of assault rifles, and some might want to give them to kindergarteners.

Andrea: Right. Or they want to get rid of books and drag queens.

Victoria: Right. Yeah. But it is interesting that it points back to that question of belonging and safety. Always. It's just what a mammal wants, right? What a mammal wants man wants. What a mammal needs. Everyone, our age group is now singing along with us, “What a man wants. What a man needs...” That is our next hit from our band.

Andrea: The band could be called How to Stop Feeling Like Shit.

Victoria: I mean, it's the name of your book. It's a great book.

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Andrea: Thank you.

Victoria: I'd love to talk about it.

Andrea: Okay.

Victoria: So, why did you write it? Tell me about that process.

Andrea: I like to always start this conversation by saying the title is tongue in cheek, but it is directly related to the reason that I wrote it. It is not for people who are truly, truly feeling like shit; chronic depression and things like that. If that is you, my heart goes out to you, and you probably know already, but seeking professional help is the way to go.

So, in 2014, I got certified... I almost said diagnosed... certified... slightly different... in the work of Dr. Brené Brown. I'm sure your listeners are familiar her work. It's shame work, really. Which is sort of funny, because I never thought that I would be facilitating shame work. But the long and short of it is, in that particular methodology we talk about something called “the armor.”

The armor are the behaviors that we employ when we're trying to avoid shame. So, the people pleasing, the perfectionism, the numbing out, the isolating instead of reaching out, control, blame, and all these things that we do to try to avoid failure, criticism, judgment, and shame. In the methodology, Brené talks about just a handful of the behaviors.

She says, “There are more behaviors, and you all can talk about those in your groups.” I was like, “I'm going to write a whole book about it.” Because I know a bunch, paying attention to my community over the years. I came

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up with 14 of them. I want to emphasize that these behaviors work, until they don't.

Perfectionism, control, and over achieving got me to graduate with honors from college. They work, and then they're exhausting. You get to a point where you realize it really truly isn't your authentic self, and these are not great ways to cope. Then that's when it starts to feel like shit. Hence, the title of the book.

Victoria: Absolutely. I love that you make that point. So many of the people I work with feel so poorly about themselves. They feel so bad when they're like, “Oh, man, I did the perfectionist thing. My dad called and I people-pleased him again. I fawned again,” or whatever. And I'm like, it's because it's a survival skill. If you were dropped into water, you'd start treading, like you'd start swimming, you'd head up.

Andrea: Yeah. I tell people this in the beginning of the book, it's not about eradicating these behaviors from your life and kicking them out. I mean, that's just another form of perfectionism, trying to only lean into your healthy coping mechanisms. I still people please. If I would have forgotten about this appointment that you and I had, and then was like, “Oh shit, I completely forgot,” I might have gone overboard to try to be perceived by you as professional and efficient and not a flake, and all these things.

So, we still do them. It's a matter of just noticing when you're doing them, and trying your best to lean into self-compassion instead of beating yourself up. Also, talking about it out loud instead of holding it all in.

Victoria: For sure. That points intentionality.

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Andrea: Yeah, 100%. It just it goes back to that self-awareness, which I think people might be tired of hearing from self-help experts. So much of the work is self-awareness. But it is so true. You turn the lights on.

Victoria: Yeah, people want the magic bullet. They want the magic pill. They want to know. So, I got an email this morning that was like, “Hi, I have chronic depression, will breathwork fix it?” I'm like, “A-number one. No, my beautiful, perfect love, my darling Angel. No. It can be part of the solution.” But looking for any one thing to save us from knowing ourselves, that's the slippery road. The slippery slope. I'm very bad at euphemisms in English, because I didn't really grow up with the American sayings. So, slippery road doesn't make any sense. But I said it out loud.

Andrea: I'm a big advocate of mixing metaphors. So, do what you want.

Victoria: Okay, great. Thank you. I love like 14 metaphors all at once, which is very Argentine of me. A very chaotic, circuitous path to making the point I could have made in like three words.

Andrea: That's okay. We're here for it.

Victoria: Thanks. Thank you. I really appreciate it. I feel seen, I feel heard, I appreciate it.

Andrea: Go for it. Breathwork can help with that, too.

Victoria: Breathwork can. Breathwork can help with metaphors. It mixes them beautifully. So, while we're talking about light, fun topics, let's talk about shame. It's such a heavy thing that I think most people don't realize is the hook. So often, clients will come to coaching and they're like, “I'm

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grumpy because... She did this, and she said that, and they did whatever...”

I'm like, “Well, could all of that actually be you in a bit of a shame spiral?” That's when the tears come. “Aargh, I was out here blaming everyone, but it was this internal story that I don't matter. There's something wrong with me.”

Andrea: Yeah, I mean, we can talk about that from a couple of different angles, I think. When people hear shame, just sort of in the simplest terms, and especially if they listen to Brené talk about it, Brené always likes to say it's that feeling of unworthiness, and feeling like you don't belong, which I think can be helpful. Some people jump right in, and they're like, “Yeah, I can relate to that. That's exactly how I feel.”

I never really felt like that. However, my biggest wound, the way I describe it, is I am terrified that I'm going to find out that it is true that nobody really gives a shit about me. That everyone's just been either using me, because they want something, or just humoring me. Like, “She's kind of funny, but she's so fucking annoying and I don't really like to be around her.”

Which is the same thing. It's just a slightly different flavor. That's how I describe it, and that's how it sort of lives in my body and my head. So, that's what I invite people to do, is think about the deepest layers. In your seven-layer dip, the very bottom... actually, the tray. It's not even the container, it's the tray. Whether it's plastic, glass, or aluminum, whatever. What is that, that real deep-down fear? And how would you describe it specifically?

Victoria: Right. So often, it's hard to know what it is, right? It can feel really challenging. So, what helped me was to sort of keep a feelings diary and a

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freakout diary. And I say words like freak out, because they make me giggle a little bit. What are the things that eff me up, that hurt my feelings, that I get grumbled about? Where it's not just, “Eww, that annoying.”

What would someone say that would make me go, “Oh,” and get energetically small? Because that points to our inner children. That points to that deep level. “Oh, ouch.” And/or what would take me into defensiveness most quickly? “No, I didn't mean that. I didn't... I don't want you to think... You're misunderstanding me. What I really need to say...” That's the pathway, that's that little roadmap to that deepest wounding, for me.

What about for you? How did you figure it out?

Andrea: Well, one of my oldest memories, the first time I really got my heart broken, was my childhood best friend. We'd been best friends since second grade, and then around third or fourth grade we had this other friend. I'll call them, Thing One and Thing Two. Thing One was my first friend. The three of us; me, Thing One and Thing two; we were this trio.

We did things like we would paint shirts that said “Best Friend 1, 2, 3,” and we'd wear them to school, and be happy, have matching scrunchies Esprit bags, and things like that. Around fourth or fifth grade, we all were in Girl Scouts together, we always went to all these trips, and especially at summertime, it was Girl Scout Camp. It was the most fun, and it was a sleepaway camp.

And so, it was summertime, and I don't remember the actual logistics of how it worked out, but I had probably asked my mom, “When are we going this year?” And then I have found out that the two of them, Thing One and

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Thing Two, had planned camp together without me, and went on canoe camp.

I remember distinctly thinking, even to the detail of they looked at the catalog together and picked and planned. Who knows if that was really true, unless their moms picked it. I was so devastated. You know what's funny, I circled back... I mean, that was 40 years ago, right? Almost 40 years ago, I remember.

I had circled back with Thing Two, I still talked to Thing One a little bit more often, but she somehow it came up. She said, “I got the chickenpox that summer I went to Girl Scout camp with Thing One.” And even now, as a 48-year-old woman, I was like, “Well, maybe you shouldn't have gone without me.”

Victoria: God will show you. Not to be like “Karma is a bitch,” but...

Andrea: I tell that story because it's those moments that live with us forever, for decades. It was a shaming memory for me. Neither of these girls purposely shamed me or set out to do it. But it was that feeling of being left out. What I help women do, is walk through that because we are still going to experience it.

It's not about avoiding those situations. I want to know; how do you cope in those moments? Is it healthy for you? Is it pointing you in the direction that you actually want to be, to be proud of yourself? And if not, let's look at different ways of coping. There's science to back up the better ways of coping.

Victoria: Yeah. I appreciate you pointing us back to the inner child work, because it's just endlessly useful to look at where the littles of us can have

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our hurts. It impacts the narrative of who we are so much. And that narrative is part and parcel of our nervous system reaction to life as a grown-ass women.

Andrea: Yeah, and I love that you talk about inner child stuff. And one of the things that's been so impactful for me, and I want to say this out loud, in hopes that it touches some of your listeners. When I hear people talk about inner child stuff, I have that one memory with my friends, and at the end of the day, I was incredibly lucky that I had two great parents at home that loved me to pieces.

I don't have very many painful childhood memories where I think it would be advantageous... I mean, I have a couple here and there... but my stuff was the teenage years. When I heard on social media, someone talking about inner teen work, I had a visceral reaction.

My teenage self was woken up from the dead, rose up with her middle finger up, and ready to rage. That girl, especially the later teens, still child... Had one foot in childhood and one foot in adulthood. I was having sex from the time I was 15, which can create stuff. That's the real work that I had to do. I don't know if that was your experience, too.

Victoria: Yeah, I mean, there was some stuff from childhood, for sure. But yeah, being a teen in the 90s, huh? I was cute. Yeah, it was fun. A friend and I were talking the other day about how the Daria, grumpy girl, complainy, how that ethos was such an ethos.

Andrea: Yeah. I liked Quinn, though. Sorry.

Victoria: Yeah.

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Andrea: I was a. See what I just did there?

Victoria: Kelly Kapowski. Way to take us back. I mean, this is just kapow! Geep cut Gen X.

Andrea: Kelly Kapowski had her own problems, too.

Victoria: Come on. I just haven't heard the name Kelly Kapowski in 30 years? I don't know. It's been a hot minute. It's been a minute, and I appreciate it.

Andrea: Daria, and *My So-Called Life*.

Victoria: Oh, *My So-Called Life*. Wow.

Andrea: I watched that recently, from a whole different perspective. Even on the first episode, I was team parents. That was a weird shift. I was like, “I get it.” My mom was mad.

Victoria: Well, I mean, come on. They were up to some wild business.

Andrea: Regular teenage stuff, though.

Victoria: I was about to say, just like the rest of us.

Andrea: Growing up in the 90s was fun, and also, I think, different than how teens have it today. Which, I mean, that's a whole other podcast. If you're raising Generation Z, like I am; I have two teenagers right now. I want to hear more about the Daria stuff.

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Victoria: Yeah, just it was this ethos of being the complainy, nothing's right, everything's angsty, and that was cool. It's just interesting to see how that continues on today.

Andrea: It's the Gen X Cynicism. We have a lot of that. And it's understandable. We are this generation who is not doing as well as our parents; the first generation to go backwards. We unfortunately pass that on to Millennials.

Victoria: Right. Yeah. We were completely feral. Totally, completely feral, and in many ways still are. Oh, Gen X. Big love to you, Gen X. I see you. And we smell like team spirit. We would literally fight you, that's the thing. Because we didn't fight anyone with our words and our thumbs. Oh, no. We pulled hair. You know what I mean? There were literal fights. There were fights in my middle school, high school, every day growing up.

Andrea: Just windmill swing.

Victoria: Oh, my God, terrible. But no cyber bullying, so it's shifted. Yeah, but healing the inner teenager is such huge work. I mean, recently with my clients, I've been sort of expanding the whole inner children. When I talk about inner children, I think people can get really caught up on there being like one singular inner child, and it can get kind of confusing. But really, anyone younger than you today is sort of a children of you. Right? You know what I mean?

And so, I was working with a woman last week who's in her early 50s. We were working with her inner 35-year-old. Which is the one who married the guy she wishes she hadn't married and have the kids with. We were doing some big work with her in this re-parenting framework. So, it was less like an Internal Family Systems parts work thing, because it wasn't a part, it

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wasn't an entity other than her. It was 35-year-old her, which that's the children of her.

Andrea: Right. Yeah. It's all important. I wanted to kind of dip our toes in this because I think when we hear the term inner child work, we think 12 or 13 and under. There are so many different stages of your life that I think would be helpful even to look back on and help self-compassion for. Because I know in my healing journey, what's been incredibly rewarding and helped me move forward, is forgiving myself.

And if I can't get to a place of “forgiveness,” at the very least having self-compassion for that part of me that was just trying to get her needs met, behaved in a reckless manner, just was not my best self, and knew better and chose not to do better. I think that can get a little wonky, too.

We love that Maya Angelou quote, “When we know better, we do better.” And I'm like, I didn't. Yeah, I chose the wrong path sometimes, when I was in a terrible place.

Victoria: But that's when I would come in and say, “I think it was a part of you that chose the path.” You know what I mean? That your wiser self was perhaps, “Maybe let me pull back and not talk for you. That's not feminist for moi.” Like, there was a part of me that needed that reenactment, needed to work that out in my nervous system, needed to do the dumb thing that I knew was totally dumb.

We did such dumb stuff in high school, right? Oh, wow. Okay, we all did dumb stuff. Now my brain is like, timeline of dumb. But just really having, like you said, compassion for that part, and that our wisest self perhaps was stepping back to let us figure it out.

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Andrea: Yeah. Right. And I also think that, you know, this being a feminist podcast, we also need to sometimes reach into the pockets of the culture that raised us. I've just been right now unpacking, I mean, I haven't announced this to my audience yet, but I'll just say it here. I just left my second marriage. And I am like, in this place of drawing a line in the sand.

I am not here to be domesticated anymore. I am a retired wife. I got so good at it, where my partners were the one who had the most advantage, and I just I don't want to be domesticated anymore. This whole journey of non-monogamy has been wild and fun, but what I'm unpacking specifically, is this need to be, and sometimes it's a desperate need, to be picked.

Because my whole life, I have been looking for “the one” to turn towards me and pick me. And say, “You are worthy of me committing to and marrying, and giving you my seed to raise my children.” It's this whole kind of patriarchal... And me just like being “Oh, I'm so thankful.”

I stayed in a relationship for a long time, in my 20s, because not so much I was afraid of getting back out there and dating, but it was just this whole understanding, and this was largely unconscious, understanding of ‘I need to go out there and get picked again,’ and the performing and the proving and the pleasing and the perfecting that goes with that.

That whole thing I've been writing a lot about just personally, and forgiving myself and having loads of compassion for that girl, that did that tap dance for so long, sweated her ass off, and it wasn't my fault. It was largely this like choice that I made because it was for survival.

Victoria: Right. I've been writing a lot too, about this trope of self-forgiveness. It's really shaping up that I don't like it. And here's what I mean, I don't think that teenage me, me in my 20s, me who got into my first

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marriage, me who stayed in an abusive marriage, she doesn't need to be forgiven. She needs the second half of what you're saying, the understanding, the compassion, and the care.

For me, in my body, what forgiving her implies, is that she actually fucked up. But I don't think she did. She didn't make decisions that actually ended up serving us, the collective us, of me and all of my parts and my inner children. But she was actually doing the best she could from the nervous system regulations she had from the story; she had the script, she had the socialization, the conditioning, all of the ingredients in the soup of her in that moment, led her to stay with the jerk.

Led her learn to go looking for the jerk; “And you leave my dad out of this.” Then, start dating the jerk; not like the jerk but complain about the jerk; but stay with the jerk, and then marry the jerk. Right? See what I mean about forgiving her?

Andrea: I see the difference. I love what you said. I think there are some people that should probably go back and listen to that very quick rundown of reasons that you stayed, right? Nervous system being one of them. I mean, that's something that I love to talk about. Because it's not something that is, around my expertise; I know it's yours.

It's one of those things where... My undergrad was in Exercise Physiology, which I don't do anything with it. But I still geek out on the human body, and I love those anatomy charts. One of them, you know, is the nervous system that runs through your entire body. It runs the show. It's different from your skeleton, from your muscles, because it's the nervous system that's big boss.

Victoria: The vagus nerve, it rules the roost for sure.

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Andrea: Yeah, and it really is the ruler of so many of our behaviors and thoughts and, doing that kind of work has allowed me to have so much grace for myself, and my kids too. If anyone's listening who has, especially, teenagers. I remember what it's like to be a teenager, and sometimes it drives me nuts listening to them obsess on things. I remember when I had no responsibilities, and this boy, I thought he hung the moon. He doesn't.

Victoria: Now, you know.

Andrea: That's your nervous system.

Victoria: That's your nervous system. The kids, you really sent me today. I'm like really? Ah, the 90s! Wow.

Andrea: You know what's interesting? I was watching, I briefly saw, a Nirvana Unplugged that they did on MTV. It had to have been early, early 90s. I'm 48, by the way. I think I was 16 when that band kind of came onto the scene, at least in pop culture. Of course, my daughter she has a Deftones t-shirt and Guns and Roses.

This thing is like a sidebar, no one really cares. But we didn't know how great it was until 10 years out. I think we were just so primed from watching our older siblings, people older than us in the 80s, which was so much... The 80s were a lot.

Victoria: The 80s were a lot! We have lots of “Karma Chameleons,” so much neon and lace, and Cyndi Lauper. Oh god, what's not to love, right?

Andrea: And Madonna, watching her career over the decades. She was my first lesson in what is feminism, and even now, side note, I think what she's doing to her face is on purpose so that we will talk about her.

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Victoria: Oh, that's interesting. She's creating that.

Andrea: She's that smart.

Victoria: She's a brilliant businesswoman. She's really 'oof.'

Andrea: Has been from the beginning.

Victoria: Yeah, from jump. Yeah, she really was like, okay, what is the zeitgeist? What's really going to push the buttons and maybe get me censored, and therefore make me into a thing? She's no fool. No, absolutely no fool.

Andrea: She's up there with Beyoncé.

Victoria: Oh, yeah. If we think about the whole “Papa Don't Preach” thing, bringing it right back to shame. How was that for a segue? Did you like that? That was impressive.

Andrea: Yeah, I'm in 100%. And her like masturbating up on stage, back then. Even “Like a Virgin,” I remember asking my mom, I was nine, I asked her what a virgin was, and without missing a beat she said it's a woman who has lots of boyfriends. That was such an appropriate answer for a 9-year-old.

Victoria: Interesting.

Andrea: My mom was Catholic, and there no shame in it. But I was like, “Good answer.”

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Victoria: Good answer. Way to go, mom. So, circling back to shame. We did so well. How do you guide folks? Yeah. What do you say to folks when they're both in the shame spiral and when that tends to be their nervous system, steady state?

Andrea: I take people through an entire process. It comes down to the data and the research, from Brené's decades of workings. Tens of thousands of pieces of data. There's a whole process and you cannot skip over it. The very important part, is that you have to know when you're in it. That might sound obvious, but for some people, they're so used to it that they don't even know.

So, it's understanding what happens to you physiologically. For many of us, it's tunnel vision; we get hot, your armpits might start tingling, because you might start to sweat. Time feels like it's slowing down. It's understanding what your physiological response is, so that you can know very quickly when you're in it.

We also go through this whole process of understanding your triggers. We look at your ideal identities, like how you want to be perceived by other people in all areas of your life. As well as, the polar opposite of that, your unwanted identities. That way, you can get a very clear understanding of when you're in it.

Then, when you do know that you're in it, or you're at risk for it... Because it's not always about just being in these depths of despair, shame spiral. It's sometimes these small, seemingly innocuous things that can turn out to kick our asses up and down the street.

It's also understanding how we behave when we're in it. So, for many of us, we fight shame with shame; we fire back at people. These are the Darrias of

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the world. Gen X loves it. Especially with people that we care about the most. We'll shit back at them.

Victoria: Absolutely.

Andrea: Even if they didn't mean to shame us. Like, if it was like on accident. We'll still fire back. Some people, they completely isolate. Some people will brown nose, and people please and suck up. So, it's understanding what those behaviors are, as well. All of that to say, I invite people to get intimate with shame in their life, because whether you know it or not, it is running the show.

It is. People say, “Well, I don't feel ashamed all that much.” I say, “Well, are you codependent? Do you people please? Do you engage in perfectionism? Because if you are, shame is running the show. Because those behaviors are helping you to avoid shame.

From there, it's really about compassion and empathy. So, having compassion for yourself in those moments. What does your self-talk sound like? As well as, having a support system in your life where you can go to people and tell them what happened. And hopefully, and this might take a while, and is around trust building and sometimes having contextual conversations about what empathy looks like for the both of you, right?

Is hopefully being met with love and empathy, exactly how you like to be supported. That might look different with different people or different situations. But that's kind of the long and short of it, and how that whole process works. I just condensed it down in less than five minutes, what is a 12-module methodology. That's the bite size.

Victoria: That's an amazing process.

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Andrea: It really is life changing. I'm just ending right now with the online program. There are seven women in the program, and we're at the very end. I always tell them, “This is not beginner work. This is PhD level personal development.” One of them said, at the very end she goes, “This is very unsexy.” It's not glamorous.

Victoria: It's not glamorous because you've got to get into the deep dark of it, and really take a look at... Because it's like the deeper the wounding, the more the claws come out. And the more we act out of our integrity. We're not in our dignity, we're not embodied, we're just lashing out or shutting down. It's not cute. It's not sexy. It feels like shit at the end of the day.

Andrea: It feels like shit. Sometimes it feels good in the moment. I do want to make that distinction, is that sometimes it feels good in the moment because it is a defense mechanism and it's what we're used to.

Victoria: The behavior, absolutely. Well, it gives you a little dopamine blast. Yeah, absolutely gives you dopamine, probably some endorphins, too, if there's a lot of fast movement. That little quick burst of adrenaline, as you go into sympathetic activation, of like, “Why did you say that?” Whatever. That doesn't not feel good, when it's that first little zip, right? If you're used to it.

Particularly if getting that zap of adrenaline in your belly is coded as doing something good for yourself. And I think this is a whole other podcast. Come back, we'll do it. The trope of “standing up for myself.”

Andrea: Oh, yeah, that's another conversation.

Victoria: Let's pin that. But please, please subscribe and follow, so you don't miss that conversation.

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Andrea: As a powerful woman that's typically not afraid to speak my mind, I've learned those lessons the hard way and had to make a lot of amends, and clean up some messes.

Victoria: We'll talk about that. Okay. But yeah, it does feel good. It feels good for a second, until you are chagrined by your own jerkfacedness. Yeah. Shaking my head over here. I can feel it. They don't even need to see it. They can just feel that.

Andrea: That sinking in your stomach when the words fly out of your mouth, and you've made fun of someone's hairline. Oh, it felt good for like a second. And then you're like, “Oh, that was cruel.”

Victoria: That's not who I actually am. For me, because I was a funny girl too, that was my main buffer. That was my main way to not have the actual light of anyone looking actually at me, and they would only look at the Joker. It took some time, in my 20s and early 30s, to figure out how to not use that. I didn't realize I was hurting people. That's where I'm going.

I was making jokes to deflect and buffer, and not have anyone look at me, but would hurt people's feelings.

Andrea: Oh, gotcha. When it went a little bit too far?

Victoria: Yeah. Because I didn't know what the line was. Because my nervous system was so intensely inward looking to try to protect me, that I wasn't reading the room. I was just in that neuro protective funny, funny, funny, funny, right? I wouldn't see people's faces start to fall. And people start to get squirmy. And people start to like, “Hey, ouch.”

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Andrea: I'm glad you brought that up. Because I think that whether someone's listening to this, and they are the funny one who deflects with humor, like you and I, or they are the person who kind of puts on that tough person facade, or they are sort of the quiet one who just sits back and waits for something to happen.

Remember, I hired a new therapist in 2020 because I went into a downward spiral. In maybe our third or fourth session, she said, “Are you always this entertaining when you talk to your therapists?”

I immediately said, “Well, yeah, because if I wasn't you might actually... and I'm talking about my problems and the most vulnerable parts of me... if I don't also add in humor to the mix, you might see me actually for exactly who I am, and completely naked and raw. I am worried that you might not like me, if you see that.”

It was this primal fear, and I am using that word very intentionally, of having someone not like me because... it wasn't just a fear that I made up out of nowhere. I have evidence of that. I have evidence of letting my guard down and being broken up with. Or my dad, my older brother, people in my life, especially men, who say, “No, thanks. I don't like that part of you.” Then we develop these stories and then behaviors. Do the dance.

Victoria: To try to protect that little tender, tender, tenderoni deep inside.

Andrea: I prefer Beefaroni.

Victoria: To tenderoni?

Andrea: Did you ever eat that, Chef Boyardee's?

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Victoria: No, I did not. We were the foreigners. My mom was like, “I don't... I don't... what is this American food?”

Andrea: I'm thinking of 80s kids. I loved it as a kid, and then when my kids were little, I remember being excited to get it for them and eat it again. My palate has definitely changed.

Victoria: It has evolved. It has evolved.

Andrea: It was so disappointing. Fish crackers are still good, though.

Victoria: You know, I haven't tried that in a hot minute.

Andrea: I'll bring some when we finally meet.

Victoria: That would be great. Let's have an in-person hang out that's mostly all about eating goldfish crackers. I usually close Slack before I do these calls, and I just flacked it. And so, someone in Anchored, in my six-month program, just posted and want coaching; the one coaching channel, it just popped up.

She writes, “If I am better, will they like me more? If I'm better, will I like me more? That's the question. That's what it boils down to.” I just think it's interesting, as we're talking about effectively this.

Andrea: Yeah, and I would immediately respond... how I want to respond as a coach, I want someone to... This can be a writing prompt: What does “better” mean to you? It's so subjective. I'm sure they definitely have some ideas, that are probably unconscious in their mind, of what “better” means to them. So, that's what I would invite someone to explore, who resonates with that.

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Victoria: I love that. I love that. And who gets to define your growth and you're bettering?

Andrea: Whose opinion is the most important to you that would make you want to write that?

Victoria: Yeah. Whose story is that? Who taught you about what good, better, best is, growing up? Whose rubric to start with? Then, what influence does the patriarchy have in there: white settler colonialism, capitalism, right?

Andrea: It's always capitalism's fault.

Victoria: Man, yeah, when in doubt, capitalism. Yeah. What are you going to do? Just keep doing what we do. Fight and make a joke. That should solve it. I think that'll really...

Andrea: That's the bottom line of this entire episode.

Victoria: And, thanks for listening. Keep making jokes.

Andrea: Bits.

Victoria: Yep. Exactly. Yeah, we give good bit. We do serve up some fierce bit, it's true. My partner's a Sag, I'm a Leo, and so we always say...

Andrea: Oh, dear.

Victoria: No, it's but it's fun, it's fun, it's.

Andrea: I'm an Aries.

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Victoria: We talked about this last time, when I was on your show. So, the three of us are the trifecta, right? Watch out. Luckily, she and I both have Taurus placements. Do you know your big three?

Andrea: Yes. They are Aries... It's not too bad; Aries, Libra and Gemini.

Victoria: Okay, the Gemini... Okay, but the Libra.

Andrea: I know, it's my sister's sign.

Victoria: Wow. Yeah. Oh, right. Cross, cross. I was sitting here going, “Don't say Scorpio, don't say Scorpio. I hope she doesn't have Scorpio in there.” Just for your own sanity.

Andrea: Definitely not any Cancer or Pisces.

Victoria: Yeah, that would be intense. Yeah, yeah. I'm Leo, Sag, Taurus.

Andrea: Okay. It's a good balance.

Victoria: It's a good balance. It's a good balance. But yeah, we're never not hams around here. There's just always a constant show.

Andrea: Cool, cool, cool.

Victoria: Well, if you had one final piece of advice to share with our good listeners, other than keep joking, which actually kind of is good advice in its way. If you're doing it intentionally, and finding the fun and finding the humor, not as a deflection.

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Andrea: Finding the balance in that, and the line is murky. I want to circle back to one thing with a caveat. We talked about the self-awareness piece. I also think that that can go sideways when we spend so much time in over identifying, is this hang up that I have, is it complex PTSD? Or is it my ADHD? Do I have autism? Am I gay?

Where you go down this path, which I say all of that from experience of my own. We can go down this path of wanting to label and pathologize ourselves. That moves us away from actually doing the work, whether it's shadow work, whether it's shame work, family systems, or whatever it is. So, just be wary of that.

At the end of the day, does it really matter? Sure. If you need services and medication, and things like that, it does. But where are you using that as a way to not do the work?

Victoria: Yeah. Is it bringing you towards more compassionate self-responsibility or more self-blame, that in its way lets you off the hook?

Andrea: Right. Exactly.

Victoria: Yeah, I'll pull that one sometimes. I'm like, “Oh, ADHD. Sorry, I forgot.” But it's like, you have 17 systems. Y'all I'm not I'm not pointing at anyone else; Mom was pointing directly at herself.

Andrea: Yeah, right. Maybe, and maybe not. Does it matter at the end of the day? Sometimes it does. Sometimes it doesn't.

Victoria: Right. Yeah, for sure. I have one final question, before you tell the good people where to find you. How'd you get so dope?

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Andrea: Well, I mean, lots of cocaine, for one.

Victoria: Okay, great.

Andrea: Which I don't do anymore.

Victoria: Okay, great.

Andrea: It was fun while it lasted. No, and I don't recommend it. I don't say perhaps to drugs. Actually, I have to get a shout out, and they do not sponsor me or anything. There's a woman who does custom, really beautiful, plates that look like china. She's called The Rebel Crafter. On one of her plates she has printed “Say perhaps to drugs,” and it makes me laugh every time I see it.

There's also one that says, “There's some whores in this house,” and I'm like, “I have to get this.”

Victoria: This is amazing. Wow. Anyway, genetics.

Andrea: My mom. Yeah, I just come from a line of powerful, fierce women who also have an incredible sense of humor.

Victoria: I love that.

Andrea: I love them.

Victoria: Shake what your mama gave you. Particularly when it's jokes.

Andrea: I don't fight the gift. That is my uncle's.

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Victoria: I fought the gift, and the gift won. So, here we are. Quippy, you and me are quippy.

Andrea: We need to do a Daria/Quinn skit, and it's all over.

Victoria: Shhh, we're going to destroy the internet. We're going to put it on YouTube. YouTube's going to break. Um, excuse me, who broke the internet? It was Andrea and Victoria. Just like that. Because you have to do it in that like, MTV, cartoon character voice.

Andrea: I always wanted a voice like this, like Quinn's was.

Victoria: You are frighteningly good at that.

Andrea: I think that was her voice.

Victoria: I think so.

Andrea: I'll do some research and go message you

Victoria: Okay. Yeah, yeah. We'll come back together on that. Stay tuned. Where can these good humans find you?

Andrea: Well, I have a podcast called *Make Some Noise*, which you have been a guest on.

Victoria: It was a delight. It wasn't a riot; it was a delight.

Andrea: And, I'm on all social platforms @heyandreaowen.

Victoria: Hey. Perfect.

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Andrea: That's it. And my website.

Victoria: And your website. Cool. Thank you for being wonderful. Thank you for being here.

Andrea: Than for being you, and letting me have so much fun with you.

Victoria: So much fun. We'll do it again.

Andrea: One hundred percent. Thanks, everybody, for listening. I'm always grateful for people's time.

Victoria: Yeah, it's a beautiful gift.

Andrea: All right. Thanks again.

Thanks for listening, my love. I hope you enjoyed that ridiculous conversation as much as I did. I just keep giggling when I think about it, because we are very, two very silly, silly geeses. So, just silly goosing along. Like silly geeses will do.

Thank you for tuning in. I appreciate you listening. Sharing this day with you is super-duper special. And I do not take it for granted that you are choosing to listen to *Feminist Wellness*. It really means a lot to me. And so, thank you. Thank you, in advance, for sharing it with your friends, with your colleagues, with your patients, with your clients, with your mom, and sharing it on social media. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

I hope you have a beautiful rest of your day. Be well, take good care of yourself. And, let's do what we do. A gentle hand on your heart, should you feel so moved. Remember, you are safe. You are held. You are loved. And,

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when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my beauty. I'll talk to you soon.

Thank you for listening to this episode of *Feminist Wellness*. If you want to learn more all about somatics, what the heck that word means, and why it matters for your life, head on over to VictoriaAlbina.com/somaticswebinar for a free webinar all about it. Have a beautiful day my darling, and I'll see you next week. Ciao.