

Ep #270: Interdependence: The Healthy Power of Needing Each Other



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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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.

Hello, hello, my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. I was at a dinner party the other day, and this new acquaintance who I was getting to know... We were learning about each other, right? I told her about what I do. That I'm a Family Nurse Practitioner by training, and I work as a Master Certified Life Coach... and somatic experiencing and breathwork. I was just telling her all the stuff I do here around emotional outsourcing.

Oh, soon to be published author... By soon, I mean literally a little less than a year from now. But I'm still so excited. I'm working with the best editor at my publishing house. I'm thrilled. Anyway, I digress.

So, I was telling her all about this term I coined, "emotional outsourcing", and that it means our codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing habits, which spring from not having had the three essential human needs of belonging and connection, worth and safety, met, generally, in childhood. I was just really explaining my philosophy, and how it's different from some others out there. And, just doing what you do at a casual dinner party; just talking about codependent thinking.

She looked at me and she said, "Yeah, I used to be really codependent. It was such a big part of my identity; how defective I was. And now, things are so much better because I'm just so independent. I don't lean on anybody. I don't let anybody lean on me. I just make sure I take care of my own needs, right? Because I don't want to be needy like I was when I was codependent."

Well, I can understand how she came to think this way, given the popular narratives around codependence and independence, and those sort of

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being posited as the two options, really, in a lot of popular circles where these things are discussed. And so, obviously, I'm not criticizing or critiquing this woman; I have no interest in that. I'm generally interested in critiquing systems.

But it sort of just was a moment of, "Oh, right. This is what's out there. That if you're not codependent, then you don't have needs, you don't lean on anyone, and 'I am a rock and I'm an island.'" It made me think about the struggle and tension I felt between those two things in my own process, and how often that comes up for my clients and for strangers who are becoming friends.

And so, I wanted to share this episode about interdependence with you, because I believe interdependence is what we're aiming for as we step out of our codependent habits. Not some radical independence, because it's literally not possible.

I wouldn't be able to record this and get it into your ears without oil rig workers, without electrical plant workers, right? Without the janitor to clean the server rooms, that make it possible for this digital data to get into your ears. The people mining the cobalt, so that you can listen to me on an iPhone.

We are profoundly interdependent, right? I just named humans; the Earth, the plants the animals. So, I could go on a long non-duality rant; I have been known to. We are interdependent, my angel, and that's what I am excited to talk with you all about.

I also have a quick question for you, and I'd love it if you drop me a DM or email to podcast@Victoriaalbina.com. I have, historically, made these kind of longer form podcasts, 20, 30, 40, 50 minutes, and I've been wondering if you all might be interested in some 8-minute ones, and some 12 minutes, some quickies? Let me know. I'm going to ask on the Instagram too, over

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@victoriaalbinawellness, on the 'Gram. But let me know your opinion. Let me know your preference.

I do this show for you, right? To disseminate this information, to be of service and support to the collective and community, so let me know your preference and I'll do my best to meet it. Because we are, in fact, interdependent.

Hello, hello my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. I, myself, am feeling much better after “the Rona”. I'm taking a lot of time to rest, to take exquisite care of myself, to walk my talk. I'm out here telling you all to live self-love, so you better believe I'm doing it myself.

You may notice that my voice is a little snarfley; advanced medical term, for sure; I'm sniffily. I'm snarfley. My symptoms have been super weird. I'm totally fine one day, totally fine for a few hours, and then I can't stop sneezing or coughing, and then I'm fine. So, here we are in a sniffily moment, and we're just going to roll with it, because life is lifey, and we roll with what is.

And you know what's great? Interdependence. That was, maybe, my top-10 worst segues ever, but I'm going to roll with that, too, because here we are. So, interdependence is our theme today. In Episode 193, which is the episode before “the Rona” got me, I talked all about why interdependence is vital, what codependent thinking can do in our lives... And if you haven't heard that one, I recommend listening in before you listen to this one.

As a refresher, I have renamed codependent, perfectionist, and peoplepleasing thinking as “emotional outsourcing”. I define it as when we chronically look to find our sense of worth, value, significance, and emotional wellness, from everything and everyone outside of ourselves. Instead of believing in our own beings that we are inherently worthy of love and care exactly as we are.

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We have this outlook and habit because of our socialization, our conditioning, training in our families, and the impact of that lived experience on our nervous systems from an early age.

Some markers of codependent relating, emotional outsourcing, can include enmeshment, as evidenced by a lack of clear boundaries. People-pleasing behaviors, as a result of a negative self-concept or low self-esteem.

Reactivity, instead of responsiveness. Which can also point to dysregulation in the nervous system. Indirect, and thus, not exactly super healthy communication.

Manipulation, which is often subconscious; you don't realize you're doing it. Controlling behaviors, which most people who are controlling others don't really realize they're doing it. Challenges with emotional intimacy. Which can also be sexual intimacy, but really, here, it's emotional vulnerability and connection; because that feels really scary when you don't trust you're worthy of love.

Blaming others instead of taking personal responsibility. Or, taking on all of the blame for everything. Intense focus on your romantic relationship, or other relationships, as the source of your everything. Instead of having your own interest, goals, and things that matter to you outside the relationship, that you continue to pay attention to just as you did before being in the relationship.

When we are relating from codependent thinking we cut off our capacity to be ourselves, to grow, to mature, to shift, to change, to be autonomous, and we look to our partners to fill our emotional cup, to give us our sense of worth and validity. Which can lead to a lot of shame and guilt when things aren't going well in our relationship.

The opposite is interdependence, which is marked by mutual enrichment born of self-love and self-trust, and love and trust for the other. Some

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markers are mutually supportive boundaries that are honored and respected. Clear and direct communication; active, loving, listening. Acceptance of one another instead of living from the desire to change each other.

Holding loving, safe space for one another to be vulnerable and open. Owning what's ours to own; aka, personal responsibility, and apologizing when called for. Engaging with one another in deep and supportive ways from an open heart and without assumptions or expectations.

In interdependence all partners feel cherished, cared about, safe, and valued. And know, in a deep and powerful way, that they are not alone in the relationship. They are part of a team. And they feel safe to turn towards one another in times of need because they feel secure that their partner will not just be there physically and emotionally, they will be present for them.

In interdependence there's mutuality and reciprocity. "I trust me to show up for me. And I trust you to show up for me the way you can and want to when I ask. Not in the way my perfectionist fantasy demands that you do."

In interdependence both partners show up in their fullest autonomy; their ability to function independently and to come back together. There is a distinction between the needs of both partners, and all needs are equally respected as valid whether the other person is available to meet those needs or not.

In an interdependent relationship both partners make an effort to support one another's emotional and physical wants and needs without demanding or controlling the other, and instead taking full ownership of their own thoughts, feelings, actions, and results. They're contributions to the relationship.

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They honor their own autonomy, “I am my own person. I got me. I’m managing me,” and that of their partner. Each interdependent partner fills their own cup of healthy self-esteem, manages their own thoughts and feelings... Which is where the thought work and somatic practices I teach you here on the show, and we practice and live into in Anchored, come in... allowing for and honoring healthy separateness.

“You are you, and I am me. We come together, but we're not enmeshed and taking over each other's lives. You are you, and I am me. I trust you to take care of you, and to take care of me when I want or need support. And, vice versa. I trust each of us to say when we are and are not available to take care of the other from a place of deep emotional generosity and care.”

From this groundwork of trust each partner is able to show up in their authenticity and truth, and is not afraid to be honest. Because they believe in the importance of having needs and speaking them, instead of wishing, wanting, or expecting their partner to read their mind. Or, pretending to not have needs, which is just not a real experience of being a human. We have needs y'all; we're mammals, we need each other.

This dedication to direct, open, and honest communication, which we talked about in Episodes 31-33, creates relationships where each partner is heard and can listen to their partner's thoughts, feelings, wants, needs, without feeling guilty or getting defensive. Because they aren't taking any of it personally; Episode 188.

And instead of making things about them from their insecurity, each partner is living in their own healthy self-esteem and self-confidence. So, your partner is saying, “Hey, babe, the way you did X-Y-Z doesn't work for me,” just feels like a statement of their experience and not a dig on you.

When your mindset is all about you sourcing your worth from you, then you know in your bones that your value, and thus your self-esteem, doesn't

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come from external validation, or your partner approving of your needs. And so, the compliments and validation you do get from your partner, they feel so great. They're icing on the cake that is you. Episode 166 "Be the Cake" talks all about that.

So, when they tell you you're sexy, funny, fun, a joy to be around, oh so smart, that feels really nice, really good, and really sweet and easy to receive. And not something you're desperately grasping for because you don't actually believe it in your heart.

And because you both know you're independently totally dope and rad, your autonomy doesn't threaten the relationship. Quite the opposite, each partner standing firmly on their own two feet bolsters, deepens, and strengthens the relationship, instead of being a threat to it. Because you're dedicated to mutually supporting each other's goals without having a stake in the outcome.

Without making their success or failure mean anything at all about you. Which allows for so much more intimacy and heart-centered connection, because you care about your partner and their joy, their growth. Not, what their success or failure might mean about you or the relationship.

So, let's look at some key points about what interdependence really looks like. One: In codependent relating we expect our partners to step in like a parent would, to save us from our own lives or to make us feel better. In interdependence you know and trust that you can handle yourself and your life. You can manage your thoughts, your feels, and so you're looking to your partner to be a loving witness. And sure, to give advice when you want that.

But that's the key thing, in interdependence you ask for that. It's a conscious, intentional choice when you want it. It's no longer the old default

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that comes from codependently thinking that you are powerless, and you need your partner to be a parent figure who fixes everything for you.

Two: Acceptance is key in interdependence. And in order to step into deeper and deeper acceptance, we need to notice and drop our “how-to” or operating manuals for the people we love. We talked all about this in Episode 20. It's like the operating manual that came with your sewing machine, it tells the story of how something, a sewing machine, should act.

That's cool, if you're dealing with a sewing machine it should act the way it should, right? But we create these stories in our brains about how people in different roles... a partner, a best friend, a sibling, a child, a stranger, a waiter... should act, think, feel and be. We hold others to our own internal story, about, well, how they should be.

Instead, in interdependence we accept our partners. We expect them to be who and how they are, rather than believing that we need them to be a certain way in order for them to be worthy of our unconditional love. Right? Because that's what we're doing. We're saying, “Be how I want you to be, or I can't fully love you.”

We also tell the story, from our operating manuals, that we need them to be a certain way or we are not going to feel safe. I get that; I held that story for such a long time. I'm not talking about physical safety here, I'm talking about the stories we tell, the stories that are trapped in our nervous system, around emotional safety.

When I tell my partner I had a hard day, if they say, “Oh, sorry to hear it,” that's not going to work for me, right? They're supposed to be more effusive. They're supposed to be more engaged, right? And, that's a pretty quotidian example, but it's where these things lie. We tell the story that they need to be a specific way or we're not being loved, we're not being respected, things aren't okay.

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From interdependence, we turn inward to heal our own nervous systems, to regulate our own selves, and we hold space to love the people we love for exactly who and how they actually are. And from there, if things aren't working and you're really not feeling seen, you can make the choice to step out of the relationship. But first, try on actually accepting them and see how that works for you.

Three: In interdependence you do things to show the people you love, love. Without expecting anything in return. Just for the joy of it in your own heart and spirit because it feels really good to be loving. Not so that they will feel good, not to manipulate them, not to one-up them, not to have one on them so they'll owe you, not to make them feel good about you so you can feel good about you.

We do loving things because doing loving things is lovely. We trust and believe that our partner will do the same because the relationship is based in open-hearted reciprocity. This can look like being a loving, active listener when your partner or friend need someone to talk to, without trying to fix or control. And asking your people to listen when you need the same thing; which is absolutely a gift to the listener.

It can also look like treating your partner with all the love you have for them, without waiting for or expecting their reciprocation to look any certain way.

Four: Interdependent relationships are about supporting one another to grow, and to become our most favorite version of ourselves more and more every day. We do that, we support one another, because we want to do that for our beloved, and our beloved wants to do that for us, from the energy of "wants to".

Not from obligation energy, and certainly not from wanting our partner to change because we want them to be different for our sake, or so we can

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love them better, or so we can feel better being with them. But really, from wanting our mutual evolution.

Which, a nerd could/would/and is about to call “mutual enrichment”. Which can look like supporting each other's dreams. Covering with the kids so our partner can go to a retreat or to meditate for five minutes, and doing it without a guilt trip when they get home. Encouraging them to go for it when they want to work with a coach or another support person.

Asking engaging questions. Reading books or articles together. Or listening to a podcast, such as this one, together, because it's fun to grow and learn and evolve together. And because it's fun to do that independently, and to come back and to share what we've learned.

I wanted to end with this one, our fifth note about interdependence. I've been talking a lot about what interdependence looks like in relationship. In the ways that you connect with, communicate with, are with your loved ones, your beloved, your romantic partner, the people you care about most in the world.

I will also pause to say, interdependence lives in your internal ecosystem. When your focus is taking care of you, building your own nervous system capacity to feel safe with yourself in the world, your own capacity to trust yourself, to take deep and powerful care of yourself. When your focus is on strengthening your relationship with yourself, your own self-love, your own self-trust.

When you are taking exquisite care of yourself, without worrying what others would think or feel about you and your choices. All of that, helps to build your side of the healthy energy of interdependence. Because remember, it's all about two autonomous humans, who trust the other to be taking care of themselves and showing up in their authenticity, coming together.

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At the core of interdependence is knowing who you are and what matters to you. Trusting your partner to value you for you, as you value them for them. And in that, you know what you like. You know what matters to you. You are not afraid to ask for what you want. You continue to value your own goals and interests, on equal footing with your relationship; neither above the other.

And so, you make time for your friends, your family, your interests, your hobbies, and your boo, equally. You say yes when you mean it, and no when you don't. And, you don't people please to try to keep others happy with you, because you know that your true feelings and desires are the most important thing. Not only to you, but to your interdependent partnership.

As you allow yourself to value what you value, you hold space for your partner to do the same. Which creates a powerful mutual sense of safety that supports you both in growing.

Of course, a regulated nervous system is key to all of this. When your nervous system, your inner children, don't feel safe, adult you doesn't feel safe. That's how it works; because science. This is why my work is based in mapping our nervous system, in somatic or body-based practices, as a way to get Anchored in ourselves and to come to relationship from there.

Because when your nervous system is knee-jerk reacting to life, you are reacting to life. Even when what you most want is to respond with gentle, compassionate energy. So, I'll invite you... This is your homework, my darling... to start by asking your body what it needs, what it wants, to begin to build a little more safety, each and every day, around getting to know yourself.

Around learning what you want. Around voicing your needs. Around being vulnerable, open and honest with yourself, first. And then, with someone

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you trust. And then, with your partner, if you've never been fully open and honest there.

My darling, these shifts don't happen overnight. They start with showing your body, your nervous system, your inner children, that you can be safe with you. And from there, can be safe with the people you choose to spend your life and time with.

Next up on the homework train, I'll invite you to take a look at your relationships and to ask yourself if they fall into the codependent or interdependent camp? To begin to explore what you can do to start moving the needle towards more interdependence. Starting, of course, with how you show up in your relationship both with yourself and with those you love.

From there, you can start having the conversations about how you'd like to relate, so that you can see what's possible and what's not possible in your relationships. Above all, remember, you're here to learn and to grow. And being gentle and loving with yourself in this process is vital, my darling.

Finally, before we close out, I'll say this. Interdependence is a vital part of the remedy to white settler, colonialist, patriarchal, independence-focused ways of looking at the world that tell us to look out for number one, to go it alone, or we are messed up codependent people; which, by the way, is serious b.s.

In interdependence we work together. We lift one another up. We take care of ourselves and each other. And compensate for one another, when needed, from love. In interdependence there's care, support, encouragement. No one is abandoned. No one is left out, because we know this way of living is based in a deep belief that we only rise when we rise together.

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A truly interdependent world is one I yearn for. And it starts with every one of us choosing to connect with one another from our big open hearts in community and for the collective good. This is my deepest dream for the world I most want to see; one based in interdependence.

This is the work we do in Anchored, my six-month program. It's an interdependent community. We're bolstering one another, celebrating each other, supporting one another, as we deal with some really challenging experiences in life. It's the core of what we do for our mutual growth and enrichment, and it's so darn powerful.

It is the only program I know of combining thought work, breathwork, and of course, poly vagal system nerdity and somatics, or body-based modalities, to help us to become more embodied, more whole, more fully our authentic, interdependent, most loving version of ourselves.

Thank you for listening, my love. 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 darling. 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.