

Ep #288: Remedies for Shame



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'm so darn glad you're here. And if you're just tuning into the show, if you're new to the show and you did not listen to Episode 287, where we define shame, I'm going to lovingly and strongly recommend that you head on back there and give that a listen.

My definition of shame is a little different than most, so I think that could be really helpful before listening to this show, which is all about remedies. So here we are. We've talked quite a bit about shame.

Let's get into the things that we can do concretely, practically... Your girl's a nurse at the end of the day, right? Let's get practical... to make shame less and less our identity, less the tool we go to when life feels way too lifey and is more a story of the past. Something we used to identify with and can recognize when it comes up to say hi.

Before we dive in, I want to say that if you're living in an environment where you are treated like crap, or you're actively being shamed with frequency, or you are actually unsafe, you can do your journaling later. Getting out is the most important thing, yeah? So safety first, always and forever and ever and ever, yeah?

I will also say, if you are a person living in a racialized or marginalized body, in a society that shames you for having the absolute audacity to be the self you were born to be, then that is challenging indeed. That society will attempt to shame you frequently. That's what it does. That's how it

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attempts to keep order, right? I wish I had a magic wand to fix this, but alas, I do not.

So what those of us shamed for simply existing in this moment, on this planet, in these bodies and these identities get to do is to both continue to raise hell while also taking ever more impeccable care of ourselves and our community. We get to continue to take care of ourselves and be of service.

And one vital thing to do towards that goal of collective liberation is to work on unburdening ourselves of the shame we carry around through this life, and to thus open up the space and the capacity to show up and offer support to others in our community to do the same... with their consent, of course.

So understanding the roots and manifestations of shame is crucial. And transforming this awareness into actionable steps is where true, lived change happens. There are so many things that help us step out of shame; somatic practice, therapy, movement, dance, so many things. And I'm always out here saying, "Beware the story that there is ever only one thing," one mechanism, one pill, one protocol to solve for a complex interpersonal and society-based issue.

Because for me, that math isn't mathing. You know what I mean? There's not one solution. It's interdisciplinary, it's intersectional, it's interdependent. With that said, what I'm excited to share is the protocol that I created to help us step out of our shame identity and towards a new, more empowered story about ourselves.

One that is rooted in our inherent worth, dignity, and autonomy... And you have those things because you were born. You don't have to earn them, you don't have to prove it, and you don't have to be perfect enough. Nope, nope. You are worthy of love and care simply because you exist. Yeah?

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So, we get to do the work to return to actually knowing that, to having a self-identity, a self-story that is all about us being worthy, right? That is based on the kind of powerful, self-loving, independent sense of self that supports us living in deep interdependence and community.

Again, this needs to be part of a holistic reframing of the story of self. And please make no mistake, this is no simple journey. It's not as easy as 'do steps 1-5, rinse and repeat.' It's not that simple, and at the same time, it is. Osea, that is, we need to reset our "self" story. And the best way I know to get started is to get started.

It isn't easy, and it's definitely way harder if you don't start, right? So let's start without telling ourselves, "This is so hard." Because when we tell that story, that's the story we're believing. The action we're taking is believing that story.

So I want to invite you to put that story down. Put all of it down and consider maybe starting this journey through this protocol by saying, "I believe it is possible that I can perhaps grow just a bit." That's how we kitten step it. And see where you can grow from there. Sound good? All right.

The protocol is GRACE, G-R-A-C-E: Ground yourself, Recognize triggers, Assess thoughts, Compassion for self, Engage with values. It's not a sequential thing, it's an acronym of components of this work to keep in mind as we work to rewrite our identity. Not as someone flawed and inherently bad, but as someone beautiful and perfectly imperfect in our perfect way.

So we write down the unkind thoughts and we ask ourselves questions like the following. And before you scramble to write these all down and aren't present at all to them, I'm going to make these available on my website. If you go to VictoriaAlbina.com/288, this list of questions is right there so you

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can read along, you can copy/paste them, you can put them in your journal and work with them. You don't have to race and scramble to write them down right now. Okay? Okay.

One: Ground yourself. Shame is that sneaky little voice that likes to whisper nasty things in our ears telling us we're not good enough. When we start to feel overwhelmed by shame, that's when we take a moment to ground ourselves. I went with "ground" because it gave me the acronym GRACE, but I really want us to start with orienting, always.

And if you're in the Somatic Studio or in Anchored, you hear me in your ear on repeat saying it, "Orient that nervous system." If you're new to this and you're like, "What is that?" Head on over to VictoriAlbina.com/288; that's the number episode. This is download, a free orienting exercise. There's also a body scan. There's a whole suite of meditations and nervous system exercises available just for you.

So we orient, yeah. We bring our nervous system into this time and place, and not into the past or the future where things are uncertain, where there's question marks. In this moment, when we are oriented, grounded, present in this moment, we know that we are safe, right? Because right now there's no lions, there's no tigers. There is a distinct paucity of bears so I can let my nervous system know there's nothing to be ashamed about right now.

We orient our nervous system and we find the ground, connect with the earth, anchor yourself in Pachamama, our Earth Mother, if that's your vibe. Connect with the present moment through physical sensation and experience. Sit quietly, close your eyes, attune to your lungs and your air moving through your lungs, filling them, gently leaving your body.

Just attune to what is, no need to change your breath. This simple act can help you calm your nervous system and bring you back to the present moment, before you spiral out into shame. If it feels safe enough to do so,

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do a body scan, or scan the space around your body if that's safer, and let yourself truly pause and be here with yourself in the now.

This supports us stepping into choicefulness and responding, instead of reacting from our old programming. Practice doing this often, so that when you are actually activated into shame, you're in the habit of pausing and reconnecting with yourself so you can ask yourself some really smart questions before you head on down that shame spiral.

Two: This is another one to do when we're not actively in shame, is recognizing triggers. Many of us have no idea that shame has taken over until we're fully in it. So this is all about noticing when that shame voice starts to whisper in your ear, and then when it actually pops up, and then actually starts screaming.

The goal, obviously, is to hear it when it's whispering, long before it screams, so we build our capacity to recognize nervous system shifts. So that we can have more embodied autonomy. So we can know what's actually happening for and in us when it's happening.

Again, we practice this when we're not activated so that it becomes second nature to have awareness of what's actually going on when we are flooded with shame.

There are two key skills here: Identifying situations where your nervous system, inner children parts get worked up and go to shame. And the second, is building emotional awareness. So you can start to identify those subtle whispers of emotion arising. So you can resource yourself to either calm your nervous system, if that's what you need to do in the moment, or you can stay with that worked up emotion if you have the capacity and are in a moment in life where it's safer to do so.

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This is so much of the work we do in the Somatic Studio and is key to felt safety; which we talked about in Episode 275 and the three-part series on embodiment that followed.

I'd recommend you start with a daily check-in and journaling. Keep note of when shame pops up, when you feel anxious, embarrassed, inadequate, when you put your perfect self down, or want to hide or sink into the couch.

Write down the context of the situation: Who was involved, what was said or done, where you were, what you were thinking, physical sensations, how you felt.

Over time, look for patterns, common triggers, recurring themes. This helps you identify situations that activate shame and supports a growing emotional awareness of yourself as you take note of the feelings you feel throughout your day and the sensations that accompany them.

Cultivating a mindfulness practice has been so helpful for me in building emotional awareness. Building that intentional connection to my own feelings and emotions has allowed me to be their watcher instead of having them run me.

You can start by sitting quietly, focusing on your breath, and observing your thoughts and feelings, without judgment, as they pass through your mind. Notice any emotions that arise, especially those linked to shame, and acknowledge them. Maybe even thank them if that feels possible. And I won't say "if", I'll say "when".

It can feel really challenging at first to think challenging emotions like, "Why would I think frustration? Annoyance? Anger?" I promise you, they're all teachers. They all have something to tell you. Usually that something's

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amiss and awry, and it would behoove you to speak up for yourself or change the situation or change your thinking.

And I get it. At first, it's a major eye roll. Like, "Ew, why would I want to think these emotions?" But eventually, with time, and the more we can sit with them and be with them, the more possible it's been in my life. And I see it in my clients day after day after day. We start to shift our relationship to these challenging experiences, even shame.

Where we don't get so mad at it for existing, but instead we can become its ally, its accomplice, its co-conspirator in making our lives and thus our communities ever better.

Three: Assess thoughts. I was so used to having such meany pants thoughts about myself that I didn't even recognize them as mean or negative or shame inducing. Because they were just the thoughts that made up my life for as long as I could remember.

And if you're this deep into a show about shame, you're probably living similarly too. It's a fair deduction, wouldn't you say? Recall, my darling little porcupine quill, that the thoughts we think on repeat create our lived experience of life. It's part of how brains work. And of course, what fires together, wires together, when we're talking about neurons, right?

So not thinking really mean things about ourselves is a pretty important part of rewiring this whole shame identity in which we truly believe we are inherently pretty darn flawed and bad, no good, wastes of air, right?

I want to invite you to pause and write down your unkind thoughts. And then ask yourself questions like:

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Is this thought based on facts or assumptions? What evidence do I have to support this thought? What evidence do I have that contradicts this thought? What would I say to a friend in a similar situation? What would I say to someone I care about who had this thought? Is this thought helpful or harmful to my wellbeing? Am I overgeneralizing or catastrophizing?

Is there a more compassionate or balanced way to look at this situation? What are some alternative explanations for what happened? How would I think about this situation if I felt more confident and self-assured? And the real kicker, would I talk this way to my five-year-old self? What would I want to say to that person, my five-year-old self, instead?

Then start doing what we nerds love to do and collect your evidence. That you are, in fact, good enough by writing down the counter evidence to silly self-protective thoughts like, "I am not good enough." Such as moments where you succeeded, got positive feedback, did something nice for a friend or a stranger, or when you had a thought that made you feel good.

One of the things I see in my groups, there's a channel in Anchored, in our community forum, which is not on social media, but we have a community forum. And I invite folks to share to brag; to tell us about a celebration, a win. And people at first don't post because they think it has to be like they won a Nobel Prize.

I'm really talking about like, "I had four glasses of water today. I usually struggle to get one down. And holy wow, I had two or three or four." Celebrate it, okay?

So if your brain says, "I am not good enough," you flood it with data, with evidence to postulate that you are in fact quite good enough, right? In all these teeny, tiny ways that seem so banal and so BS and so whatever, but I promise they add up.

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Next, we practice reframing painful or negative thoughts, which I teach my clients to do using the Thought Work Protocol; which I teach here on the show in a dozen plus places and I dive into a ton of detail on in Anchored.

You get actual coaching on how to do the Thought Work Protocol when you're in Anchored. We start with simple reframes that take you out of absolutes and start to introduce a little gray into those shame statements.

For example, from, "Oh, I always mess things up," we're not going to jump to, "Everything I do is perfect." Because what's your brain going to say? It's going to give you the full New York salute and no one's buying it. Instead go to, "I don't always mess up, just sometimes."

And then if you can get more specific, you can give yourself the grace a little more, "I don't always mess up, just when I'm tired... Just when I'm over-caffeinated... Just when I'm hungry." Start to give yourself some space to understand the things leading to that mess-up so you can both be compassionate with yourself, which is our next point, but can also start to recognize patterns.

"I go way too fast if I have too much caffeine, sugar, gluten, alcohol. I have a sensitive little system. And so, yeah, I'm going to knock things over if I've had coffee. I'd knock my whole house over." And so recognizing that isn't about letting myself off the hook, it's like saying, "Take responsibility, you chose caffeine. But also, don't be mean to yourself. It's the caffeine," right? Right.

And from there, we keep growing to, "Yeah, I do mess things up, that's human," to, "I decline to treat myself like garbage for messing up because that blocks learning and growth." So see how we grow the reframe slowly? This is bridge thoughts. This is kitten steps so you always believe in the new statement and don't just BS yourself. It's pretty smart, right?

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Finally, in this category, if positive affirmations work for you, then go for it. “I am worthy of love and respect. I am capable and competent. I am enough just as I am.”

My brain says, “No, these statements are garbage,” which is why I use the tool of bridging and slowly kitten stepping to a new belief. But some people's brains really jive on positive affirmations. If they work for you, rock it out. Do them constantly. I mean it.

Four: Compassion. I recommend showing yourself compassion through both your words and your actions. We just touched on using kinder language when you mess up or feel shame rising. And I want to encourage you to talk to yourself all the time the way I talk to you.

Remember, what we're doing here is shifting out of an identity where shame is who we are into an identity where shame has just been a part of us historically. And we believe that we are perfect little tender raviolis, sweet little kittens, just kittening along. Mammals just being mammals when life gets lifey, right?

We talk to ourselves in this new identity like a little kiddo who sure, fine, is physiologically in their forties, but it's also a sweet little perfect kid who deserves to be treated softly, kindly, gently. Contrary to what shame would have you believe.

You can't actually heal hurt with more hurt, and being mean to yourself gets you legit nowhere good and fast. So come on now, what do you actually have to lose in talking to yourself like you're worthy of kindness? What? Come on, tell me. I'm listening. Episodes 51, 133 and 151 talk about this, and I'd like to invite you to listen in after this episode finishes.

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Onto actions. Starting to treat your body with respect and kindness can do wonders to shift that shame identity that says that you don't matter. Start slowly, with a minimum baseline. Again, like an extra glass of water a day, five minutes of movement; which can be dance, yoga. A walk around the block counts. Whatever you want to add in.

Slowly keep adding in activities that nurture emotional wellbeing, like reading, listening to music, spending time in nature. Shame is exhausting, and while you might not feel like moving, physical exercise studies show this can help reduce tension, improve mood, alleviate depression. I mean, movement is incredible. So start slow, start small, and work your way up, continuing to add forms and kinds of movement that support you and feel good.

And remind yourself that, of course you think and feel this way, for all the reasons we went through in the last episode. It's not your fault. You feel shame. You were taught to. It was a brilliant defense strategy, and that sucks. I believe in you and your capacity to reduce shame's burden on your self-concept, starting with being compassionate towards yourself for the heavy weight that was put on your soft, tiny shoulders.

Finally, engage with your values. When we grow up, or live in shame or emotional outsourcing, we often lose track of our own values and what really matters to us at our core. This makes sense, because we're focused on keeping others happy with or in approval of us so we live by their values.

We talked all about values in Episode 255, and I want to encourage you to listen in and do a values clarification exercise. Take some time to reflect on what matters most to you. Write down your top five core values. For example, integrity, compassion, honesty, creativity. And then think about why each value is important to you, how it influences and can guide your life and your choices.

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From there, set specific goals that align with your core values and work towards them one at a time. For example, if one of your values is health, a goal might be to incorporate more nutritious meals into your diet. So start by bringing in *one* serving of veggies in a day. You see what we're saying? One.

You do this to start to live life the way you want to because your life matters for you, and to show yourself that you can have an identity outside of shame, outside of other people's stories about you.

Then we align our actions with our values. When faced with decisions, ask yourself, "Does this action, this choice, the next step here match up with my core values?" Use your values as a guide to make choices that feel right for you. If you're able to tap into your body's wisdom, ask your body. We work with our intuition big time in Anchored because it's so powerful to be able to listen to your somatic brilliance.

Regularly review your core values, then assess how well your actions are aligning with them. Celebrate the times you made decisions and acted in accordance with your values. And reflect on any adjustments needed to better align your actions with your values next time.

So that is how we bring some GRACE in; how we give ourselves the grace. It's how we start to systematically recognize and shift out of shame identity, fostering a healthier, more resilient self-concept, which helps us step out of emotional outsourcing and towards interdependence. Which studies show is absolutely frigging rad.

Again, those steps are: Ground yourself. I do keep wanting to say it like, "Treat yo self," but I'm not Retta. So I'm going to say, "Ground yourself." Recognize triggers. Assess thoughts. Compassion for self. Engage with values.

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Remember to do these practices when you are not in crisis, when you're not in a spiral, when things feel pretty darn okay. To kitten step this. To be kind and gentle and slow with yourself. And most importantly, to give it a try.

If you want more support in this process, this is the core of what we do in Anchored, my six-month somatic and mindset coaching program. We rewrite our core identity story to be more self-loving instead of so heavy with exhausting shame and blame. And the results are pretty frigging rad, I must say.

Learn more at VictoriAlbina.com/Anchored, where you can get on the wait list for the next cohort starting this coming fall. Yay. Thank you so much for joining me, my love.

I hope you have enjoyed the show, that it's been supportive, and I truly hope that you take the next best step for yourself to step out of shame identity and into more vibrant self-love and interdependence. Thank you. Thank you.

Alright, let's do what we do. Gentle hand on your heart should you feel so moved. And remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my beauty, and 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.