

## Ep #112: Listener Q&A - Volume 2



### 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.

Hello, hello my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. Spring is starting to show itself up here on occupied Lenape territory in the Hudson Valley of New York. It is beautiful out. I'm loving the longer days and I love getting out early in the morning to get that first morning sun on my face.

It really helps to set my circadian rhythm for the day, which gives me better energy through the day and helps me sleep better and just feels really good. So I've been loving having more daylight hours and seeing all the buds on the trees and hearing the birds and seeing the flowers start to come up. It has been beautiful.

This week, I am so excited to do another listener question and answer show. It's always such a delight to get to be in conversation with you, to answer your actual questions that you have sent in. So if there's any questions you'd like to hear answered here on the show, drop a line to [podcast@victoriaalbina.com](mailto:podcast@victoriaalbina.com) or send me a text. 917-540-8447.

And if you're not getting my text messages, I think you're going to want to check it out. It's a free service. And it's just my way of sharing a little sunshine throughout the week. So you can send a text message to 917-540-8447. Carrier rights may apply of course, but from my end, it's free. So join us. I mean, why not, right?

Okay, so let's dive right on in because I'm so excited. So our first question comes from Carol. Carol asks, "Vic, do you think it's possible to overcome codependency when we're living with an active alcoholic?" Okay, thank you so much for this one Carol, you are not alone in having this question at all.

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And I will start by saying absolutely. It is totally, totally possible. And as always, I will start with a note on safety here. If your partner is violent or abusive in any way, that is not a situation to stay in, to attempt to do your own personal work in. I want you really encourage you to take care of yourself first, get to safety, and work on your healing once you're in a stable situation.

So the work of overcoming codependency is about coming home to ourselves. It's about you learning to put your energy, your focus, your attention on you before anyone else. So the work is the same, whether you're living with someone actively using substances, or not.

It's the same whether you're partnered or single, the work is absolutely the same because it's about you prioritizing you. You learning to source your worth and value internally. Not trying to manage or control anyone or anything else, and not looking for others to validate us.

It's not only not their job, they extra can't when they're intoxicated, and thus aren't in this realm of consciousness with us. And we also get to get real that when folks are under the influence of alcohol or whatever other substance, they are likely to act differently than usual.

And if you're going to stay in that relationship, you get to have even stronger boundaries for yourself. Remembering that in this family, we state our boundaries as if you do x, I will do y. So we are always seated squarely in our own response, what we are going to do. Not an attempt to manage or control or manipulate anyone else or tell them what they should do.

So here, boundaries could be - and they all start with if you're drinking or if you've been drinking, I won't be spending time with you, I won't talk with you on the phone, I will absolutely not be in the car with you if you're

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driving, I am not available for serious conversations with you, I'm not staying over at yours.

All these sorts of loving boundaries that prioritize you taking care of you. Changing codependent habits is always possible, regardless of where we live or work or who we're with. Does that sometimes add a layer of complexity to manage with our thought work? Absolutely.

But the best situation to work on these habits or ourselves is the one we find ourselves in when we decide to change. And what I mean is kicking that can down the road saying I'll deal with this once they quit drinking, I'll deal with this when we finally break up, doesn't really serve you, my beauty.

If something inside you is saying this is the work I want and need to do now, now is the time to do it. You get to heed that call. And what's really great news is you don't have to change any circumstances in your life in order to start living your ideal of a better life, my kitten.

Your partner doesn't have to stop drinking, the kids don't have to start putting their socks in the hamper, the dog doesn't have to stop eating your shoes, and I don't know, world peace doesn't have to happen. You just get to decide how you want to think and feel about your own life and you get to decide which relationships honor your best wellness and which ones don't.

Overcoming codependency is all about you coming home to you. Getting anchored in you. Regardless of what the other person chooses for their own life. Thanks for your question Carol.

Alright, up next. Margarita writes, "How do I know when it's time to break up with my partner? I'm upset and having a really hard time most of the time but I really, really love him." Okay my love, so you will know that it's time to

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break up with your partner or a friend, a job, a parent, when your intuition, that quiet voice in your body tells you it is.

This is when that somatic bodily connection we talk about is so vital. Because the truth lies within you, my love. And the work is to learn to listen in and to discern when that voice within you is anxiety or stress, when it's worry or fear or old cassette tapes, and when it's your intuition.

And so you can end a relationship because it no longer feels good or right in your body. Because staying is no longer aligned for you. You don't have to wait for things to feel terrible. And I bring this up because I hear this all the time from my clients living in codependent thinking.

They say things like, "This relationship just sucks," or, "It's so draining." Recently a client said and I've heard this one many times before, "I wish she would just hit me; I wish she would just cheat on me." Effectively what we're saying is I want this person to do something so catastrophic that I'd have a reason, an excuse to go.

Effectively, I would have external validation to do what I know is right for me. And what you're doing with that kind of thinking is trying to protect yourself, like the reason has to be good enough somehow, so people won't think poorly of you for leaving, people won't blame you, his mom won't be mad at you, and that kind of thinking that it has to be terrible to say basta, enough, I'm out, is born of and reinforces the story that you don't trust yourself.

You don't trust your instincts, your intuition, your somatic or body-based knowing, your capacity to make smart decisions for yourself and to see them through. So my darling, you don't have to wait for a major crisis to give you reason enough. Wanting to live in joy is reason enough.

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If you are working on yourself, cleaning up your side of the street, setting healthy boundaries versus living in resentment, asking yourself, or you're judging your partner versus accepting and shifting into loving acceptance, if you're truly showing up for yourself and the relationship and you're just not happy, that's reason enough.

If you're tired of constantly, chronically struggling and trying to make it work, that can be reason enough to gently let go. Just wanting to is in fact reason enough. This also brings my brain back to what I think of as the core agreements in relationship.

To be honest, to be loving, to be kind. And if that is not what you're getting and if it's not what you're giving, run a check there and to ask yourself, how are you showing up? And how is this person showing up for you? What's the mutuality of the energetic exchange there?

And if that feels off, can that be rectified? Do you even want to? And if you do, then you get to get to work. And if you don't, then you get to get to work. Now, if it's a pattern in your life to run from relationships or situations when they get challenging, then it may be wise to pause.

Now, I didn't say to stay forever, but rather to pause and to look at what it is that you may be running from. Is it challenging conversations? Is it being seen and loved in a way you've never been that feels scary because it's uncomfortable, because it's new, you're just not used to it?

Is it being asked to grow in a way that you've never experienced? Is that the thing that's telling you, "I got to get out of here?" If any of that's resonating, then maybe you decide using your prefrontal cortex, that smart, smart part of our human brains, and you decide to stay for a certain amount of time.

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Let's say a month or three. Whatever it takes for you to get clear on your own motivation, your own intentions, your reason why for either staying or going, and to ask yourself if you truly like your reasons why. And it's so vital, my love, to make our decisions liking our reasons.

So if the reason why is that you just don't love this person anymore, the relationship is bringing more anguish or stress than it is joy and you really have done the work to clean up your side of the street, you're really looking at your own patterns, your own blocks, your own shadow side, and you've done the work to drop the judgment and find more acceptance for that other person, to show up with your full heart to the relationship and to honor whatever commitment or container you made together, and you're still experiencing more stress than you are happiness, if it's still more ugh work than it is joy, then it may just be time to go.

I'll also invite you to listen to episode 52 on unconditional love. I feel like it's a really important skill to be able to do our darnedest to unconditionally love and accept the people in our lives as they are, without question, without judgment before we decide to move on.

And again, if you've done that work and you're like, Vic, I really see where my codependent thinking is playing a role here, or my people-pleasing is showing up, where I'm judging them, where I'm in over-functioning, which is a topic of an upcoming show, so make sure you're subscribed. Don't want you to miss that.

But if you've done that work and you know you're coming correct to the relationship and it's still not working out, you get to practice something new, which is to choose yourself. Not to choose to leave because you don't want them. It's the turning around of that to say I am choosing me. I am choosing my own life, my own growth over giving my all to something that's just not working anymore.

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Just make sure you like your reasons why, my darling. Thank you for your question. Okay, the next question comes from Hannah. “V, I love this show. Thank you so much. I currently have a roommate that I’m intimate with though we’re not in a relationship and he drinks a lot. It takes all the tools in my toolbox and listening to your podcast every single day to not fall into codependent patterns with him. It’s working, and it’s empowering to recognize those thought patterns and step away from them and choose myself. But I guess what I’m asking is is this sustainable? Is this a great life lesson in choosing myself no matter what, or is this another waste of my precious time and energy? Big question. Thanks for reading. Thanks again, Hannah.”

There’s a lot there Hannah, so thank you for sending this in. So I think here what’s really important is to ask yourself what do you want to get out of this relationship, this situation with your roommate? Of course, I will start by saying in response to your question of if this is a waste of your time, that regret is always optional.

So thinking that you’re wasting your time is optional. You don’t ever have to think that you’re wasting your time. And the way to know how that feels in your body is to ask yourself, to ask your body, does this truly serve me and my growth?

Here’s where I would also encourage you to think like a scientist. If this can feel like a fun learning experiment, if you’re cool with the setup and are in it for the learning and the growth, then you can drop the expectations that it would be anything other than that. Just a fun time, casual, cool, cool, cool.

And so then for me, when I think about a situation like okay, it’s an experiment, I’m just here to show up, have fun, see what I can gain from this, then my brain doesn’t even go to the idea that I could be wasting my time because I’m just in it for the fun. But if somewhere within you there’s a

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goal that doesn't align with that, so like if you wanted a committed relationship with this person or in general, then this probably won't be sustainable.

If you do want a commitment that this person doesn't also want, the next level of your empowerment is to let go of that codependent thought habit of silently suffering and you get to voice what you want. You get to risk the possible rejection, possibly making this roommate uncomfortable, to move out of your codependent habits and closer to who you want to be.

It may be very well uncomfortable to speak your wants, and it's always more painful not to in the long run, and often the short run as well. So you asked if this was sustainable. Sometimes relationships with people who, to use your words, drink a lot, are sustainable and sometimes they aren't.

And I think again, the question I would be asking myself is what do I want and need from this situation. Does it impact my life that this person who is a roommate that you're intimate with, but what's the energy flow between you? Does his drinking impact you or because he's just your roommate, do you just close your bedroom door, get your own book out, and say he's drunk tonight, it's not about me?

So how attached or detached are you to his drinking? That's something I would really take a look at when you're thinking about sustainability. I'll also invite you to ask yourself what's behind that wondering if this is sustainable? What part of you is asking that?

Is that your inner wisdom sending you that curiosity? Or did a friend intonate that she didn't think it's sustainable? Do you see where I'm doing? Why is that question on your mind? I know when I'm asking a question like that, it's usually because it doesn't feel like a healthy, supportive situation.

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If my brain is saying, “Vic, is this sustainable?” It’s probably because it’s not. Because if it feels good or great, I’m usually not in that space of questioning it. So if you sit with yourself and you hear that yeah, a part of you is really doubting whether this relationship serves you, then you get to dig in there and to ask yourself why.

Does his drinking feel like a problem? If so, why? Why does it feel like something that’s your business? What part of this relationship feels good? What parts don’t? And you get to look at the balance of it all and to ask if this situation gets you closer to who you want to show up as in this life.

Do you want to be in a situation where to quote your words, it takes all the tools in my toolbox and listening to your podcast every single day to not fall into codependent patterns with him? So having heard myself say that out loud, it makes me think in one of two ways.

You can use this as that learning process. It seems this is your roommate, perhaps the stakes are low and this is a great time to practice supporting yourself. The other thing I always think about is is this a set of circumstances that you want to be managing?

Is continuing to be in a relationship that takes this level of work, is that the right investment of your time, energy, and effort right now? I have no idea. But my love, you do. So take a look at that.

What I do know is that when we get into alignment with ourselves for ourselves, when we know our own desires and our wants and voice them and can sit with our own or someone else’s discomfort and we can know that we are okay either way, that is what is truly sustainable.

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Sustainability is never a concern when we have our own backs and own goals that we're working towards. That shift will ensure that we are never, to borrow your phrase, my darling, wasting our precious time and energy.

Okay, and our final question for today is so nerdtastic. Check this out. "Dear Victoria, is there a difference between ADHD and buffering? Physiologically, diagnostically, or in approach to treatment. It appears there are similarities. Observable symptoms, behaviors, thought work as a treatment tool. Thanks."

My nerd, this is such a great question. So in short, yes and no. Okay, let's start with the diagnosis part of your question. So attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, ADHD, is a diagnosis and buffering is not. People with ADD, attention deficit disorder or ADHD have differences in the wiring of their brains from the population level norm.

So I'm using those words really carefully. Population level norm refers to the prevalence of one thing versus another. So it's not a judgment or saying that some people are normal because what even is normal. It's a nerd talk way of saying more people are this one way than are another. Got it?

So folks with ADD/ADHD have differences in their brain wiring from population level norm. And studies show there are electrical differences in how the brains of folks with ADD/ADHD and folks without it function. So nerd alert, to keep everyone on the same page for this episode, I will use the term ADHD because it's the term we all know.

But I actually really prefer the acronym VAST, which stands for variable attention stimulus trait. And I prefer that to ADHD because it recognizes that folks with this type of brain functioning actually have an abundance of attention instead of a deficit of it.

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And this is one of the super really cool things about someone who has a VAST or ADHD sort of functioning brain is they can do what's called hyper-focus. So they can get really absorbed in a task, a passion, a situation. When they're engaged, they are so engaged.

And I get it that that can look like buffering, but it's usually not. So the behaviors that come with ADHD or VAST aren't there to stop folks from feeling certain emotions. It's just how their brains function. In fact, when they get hyper-focused, they're actually really super duper present in what they're doing and so it's very different from buffering.

I think that we end up calling a lot of people ADHD because we are demanding that they focus on things that they're not interested in focusing on. So if you're a nerdy kid who loves science and math and it's being demanded of you that you study Russian history or literature, your brain is just like, nope, not interested.

But when you're put in a science lab, you're like, all in. You know everyone about organic chemistry, you're like, the P shell and the S shell and you just know all the nerdery. So I think what happens is that folks are being diagnosed and being told that they're not able to focus, but rather it's just that they're being asked to focus on things they don't want to, that aren't of interest.

But anyway, I will refocus myself. I love talking about brains. So back to buffering. So buffering is more neurologically linked to what is called in the research micro addiction, which is something we develop over time. We've talked about this before. You do the action, you get the dopamine, do the action, get the dopamine, do the action, get the dopamine.

And of course your brain, being a brilliant and amazing brain and body being an incredibly body are like, I like dopamine, that feels like motivation,

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that feels exciting, I want more please, let me do that buffering behavior again and again. Particularly if it keeps me from feeling certain emotions.

If I get sad and I reach for the buffer, well then I get some brain juice that makes me feel glad and I'll take that. So buffering is not a diagnosis because it has to do with habits that become coping mechanisms, where ADHD is just a different type of brain wiring.

So for example, if a person who has ADHD is let's say doing a puzzle and they decided they wanted to do this puzzle, they chose it out, it's like 1000 pieces and they're really stoked about it, then they will be so into it, so present, so passionate that hours can go by and they just don't notice because they're so focused.

Meanwhile, if someone with a more neurotypical brain, a population level norm brain is doing a puzzle to buffer when they feel anxious, then they're doing it unintentionally to try to not feel the emotions. So they would do the puzzle for hours, but they may do so numbly. Is numbly a word? In a numb way, and not even notice that they're doing the puzzle as a way to not feel.

Now, folks with ADHD can also buffer. So for example, my friend Estella has ADHD and will sometimes push her feelings away, she will buffer by mindlessly watching hour after hour of Law and Order on autoplay. But that was nothing to do with the fact that she has ADHD.

You asked if thought work can be helpful here and I would say that thought work is a great tool for most humans. It can be challenging with obsessive compulsive concerns or with intrusive thoughts, and those are best managed through therapy first, thought work next.

People with ADHD can't simply stop having their brains. Where with many buffering behaviors, we can use thought work to help us make different

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choices. Primary of which is to pause and to feel our feelings and to write it out and do our thought work to recognize what's really going on so we can shift our thinking.

I know for myself when I was swimming in the deep waters of codependent thinking and when my digestion was let's politely say unbalanced, focus was a serious challenge for me. And by learning to manage my mind and after healing my gut microbiome, bringing in the nutrients and amino acids I was missing to make the neurotransmitters I needed for optimal thinkering, which I'm deciding is a word. Thinkering is now officially a word my little ravioli.

Now, these days, I'm so much more able to focus than ever before. I also - getting to know myself, learning my own mind, managing my own mind, I give myself really thoughtful breaks, I let myself truly, truly rest, and all of that adds up to mean I'm much more able to focus now than ever before.

So if you have ADHD, my sweet, sweet, sweet one, coaching and thought work could be such a helpful option for you. And as an NP with many years of experience in functional medicine, I'll also encourage you to talk with a holistic and or functional medicine clinician to get all the tools you can to harness the power of your beautiful VAST brain.

And I'll testify, being on the other side of feeling - I felt like I had no tools. I didn't know how to manage my mind. I felt like my focus jumped all over the place, I felt like I wasn't getting anything done, I felt wildly overwhelmed and behind the eight ball, and being here feels so much better.

I make a schedule, I block my time, I rest, I stick to my schedule. When my brain tells an overwhelm story, I know how to manage it. So thought work can be incredibly helpful and there are so many other beautiful tools that can help you out there if ADHD is part of your life.

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Alright my beauties, I hope this was helpful for you. So keep sending those questions in, [podcast@victoriaalbina.com](mailto:podcast@victoriaalbina.com). You can send me a text to 917-540-8447. I give good texts. You can also DM me on Instagram, [@victoriaalbinawellness](https://www.instagram.com/victoriaalbinawellness).

Alright, thank you my beauties. Thank you for tuning in. It was a delight as always. Let's do what we do. Gentle hand on your heart if that feels supportive. Bring your attention to your breath. Nothing to change or fix. Just bring your attention there.

Remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my beauty. I'll talk to you soon.

If you've been enjoying the show and learning a ton, it's time to apply it with my expert guidance so you can live life with intention, without the anxiety, overwhelm, and resentment, so you can get unstuck. You're not going to want to miss the opportunity to join my exclusive intimate group coaching program, so head on over to [victoriaalbina.com/masterclass](https://victoriaalbina.com/masterclass) to grab your seat now. See you there. It's going to be a good one.