

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 220.

Welcome to the *Design You* podcast. A show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth and joy, here's your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey, hey friends, I'm continuing my quest this summer to bring you several episodes from some badass women and today I have another one for you that I know you are going to love. It's truly a gamechanger. So today I have Victoria Albina. And as you will hear in the episode, I am currently taking Victoria's class, Anchored, and it's really about codependency which we talk a lot about what it is. It's probably not exactly what you think. At least Victoria's definition's a little different.

It's something that not only impacts us personally, but actually really shows up in our business. So, I think this is going to blow your mind a little bit or maybe even a lot. Victoria is a master life coach. That's how I had the pleasure of meeting her is through The Life Coach School and some common friends. But she has so many more talents, and skills, and experiences in functional medicine and somatic work, which is body work. So, we talk about all of this in the episode.

I think you're truly going to love this. My work with her has been game changing. I'm always one to stay in my head. I kind of vacate my body regularly at least emotionally and intellectually. I live in my head a lot of times. I try to solve problems from my head. But there is so much wisdom in our bodies. And Victoria is here today to help us understand really what's possible when we invite our whole body, not just our neck up, to the party.

And she really gives some insights that we've probably never heard before on how codependency could be showing up in your life and your business and holding you back in ways that you don't even know. So, enjoy this incredible podcast with Victoria Albina.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Tobi: Hey, Victoria, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. I am very excited about our conversation today.

Victoria: I am so super excited too. Thank you so much for having me.

Tobi: You're welcome. So, it's so funny, your publicist or, yeah, I guess it's your publicist, somebody that helps promote you, had reached out to me a few months ago. And I had heard about you because of your friendship with Kara Loewentheil and I work with Kara too. And so knew you were a life coach and all the things. But it was so funny because when Cher reached out to me to get you on my podcast, I didn't get you on my podcast for two months but I signed up for your program. And paid you \$10,000 to work with you or something crazy.

So, this email comes to me and I'm like, "Yeah, she can be on my podcast but let me go give her thousands of dollars." Because the timing was perfect because I was really just getting into the next level of learning about the body and the body mind connection. And I've been hearing this word 'somatics' and all this stuff. So, you entered my life at the perfect time and now here you are on the podcast. And people are like, "Ooh, what does she do?" So, I'm going to let you tell people a little bit what you do before we get into the conversation.

But I just want to say that's the first time that I've ever been pitched to podcast. And then I turned around and spent thousands of dollars before I even interviewed anybody, so good work.

Victoria: I'm honored. I'm honored and delighted. And we're having fun in Anchored, right?

Tobi: We are. It's amazing, yeah, so good.

Victoria: Well, good, I'm glad.

Tobi: So, tell everybody who you are, what you do. They're going to love, I mean this conversation's going to blow their mind a little bit or a lot today.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Victoria: Yeah. A lot, let's go for a lot. A lot, it will be great, cool, done, decided.

Tobi: Okay, good, I'm with you, let's do a lot, okay, so tell them who you are and we're going to jump right in.

Victoria: Okay. So, my name is Victoria Albina. I use she, her pronouns. I am a functional medicine, holistic medicine nurse practitioner, a master certified life coach, and host of The Feminist Wellness podcast. And I also run the Anchored: Overcoming Codependency program. And I'm so glad I get to work with you.

Tobi: My mom had the – what's the book that's so famous? The Melody Beattie.

Victoria: Yeah, Codependent.

Tobi: Codependent No More. So, she had this when I was a child and I knew about this thing called codependency and it was so interesting because when I was looking for the work with you, I was thinking this idea of somatics. And you're like, "But it's, the work is codependency." And I had to stop you and be like, "Connect the dots for me." What does this even mean?

So why don't you just start there of telling us because you have a unique definition of codependency and let's start to kind of show people. It's not exactly maybe what they think it is and it shows up in a lot of different ways, not just say in a husband wife relationship or mother child relationship or that kind of thing. Yeah.

Victoria: Totally. So, I define codependency as chronically and habitually sourcing our sense of validation, wellness and worth from outside of ourselves, instead of from within ourselves. So, we're looking to everyone and everything, and I mean everyone and everything, like you just said, not just your mom, not just your partner but your work, your clients, your website, your best friend, your neighbor, strangers on the bus.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Tobi: Your social media.

Victoria: Your social media, your degrees, your credentials, your certificates, your everything to give you that sense of validation, to let you feel as though those things could create the feeling of worthiness within you. Which of course we know as master certified coaches, it's our thoughts that are doing that. But we look outside of ourselves. And so, we spend our lifetime chronically seeking other people and things to tell us we're okay.

Tobi: Ugh, yes.

Victoria: I know, it's so...

Tobi: I mean I've been in your program now since February and learning so much. Yet you just blew my mind already because you struck a chord with me when you're like, "Damn it, and she calls me out on all the learning and the certificates." Not that you can't do those things but just making sure you know why you're doing them and what you're making them mean about you. So interesting. Okay, so a little bit before we got started.

We had just a brief chat and you said, "I think it would be really interesting for your audience to talk about how codependency creeps into business and it shows up." You said two words that I was like ding, ding, ding, this is my audience. It shows up as perfectionism and people pleasing. And I would say all the creatives listening right now are like, "Yes, my name is Tobi and I'm a perfectionist and a people pleaser." That is us. And as creatives kind of inherently in what we do because we're putting our work out in the world almost as a representation of us.

We have trained ourselves to be codependent right off the bat by the nature of our work. Let's get into that conversation. How does this start to creep in and how does it sort of show up?

Victoria: Right. So, I think of perfectionism and people pleasing as thought habits that are sort of symptoms of codependent thinking of the root cause wounding, the root cause of way of thinking about life in the world. And so,

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

perfectionism it makes so much sense. If you're chronically and constantly seeking external validation you want to appear infallible. Everything you do is perfect, the most bestest, the most amazingest. And then you want to people please because other people liking you is more important than you liking you. Ouch. Ouch.

Tobi: Yes, so ouchy, major ouch. Yes. And I was just thinking about this. Even kind of the creative group of us we're almost like the Instagram highlight reel before Instagram because our whole life was about making everything look perfect, every photograph. You might take a picture to go in a magazine of a room and it looks perfect. On the other side of the room could be total chaos and disaster but nobody can see that. So, in two dimension we were always creating these fantasies of an event or a home, or a whatever.

And so, we've been practicing perfectionism kind of the whole time and didn't even know that's really what it was, or that we were seeking our validation through it. Yeah, but then it starts to show up because you're like, "Wait, I thought I would be happier. I thought when I had these successes, or I was in a magazine, or I got big clients, I thought I would feel different, yet I feel still the same icky perfectionist, people pleaser that I always felt", right?

Victoria: Completely. Completely, yeah.

Tobi: So, what do we need to know about this? What is even the goal? I think that confuses people sometimes because we're like, "Wait, I thought the goal was for my clients to be happy and for people to like what I do."

Victoria: Sure. And there's no problem with people liking what you do, that's a fabulous thing and it pays the bills when that's your job. But the issue in codependent thinking is the dependence on the other person to approve of you, which takes you out of your authenticity. So, it's about the end of self-betrayal and a return to authenticity.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Tobi: Say more. Say more. That is so good. So how does it look different if you're in your authentic self versus this people pleaser self?

Victoria: Yeah. So, your authentic self can be [inaudible], you can throw paint on the proverbial canvas of life and say, "This is my art. This is my work. This is the most perfect representation of who I am, what I do, what I'm about. If you like it, fantastic. And if you don't, fantastic." But I am not changing me in the hopes of potentially because we're getting up in people's models where we're deciding what their thoughts are before they've even told us. I am not changing me in the hopes of that being pleasing to you because I'm not available for that.

Tobi: That gives me chills in my whole being. That is so amazing. I love it. The best part is if you like it, fabulous and if you don't, fabulous. Because I think that's where people get hung up because they are like, "If you like it, fabulous, if you don't, what did I do wrong?"

Victoria: Right. And change myself.

Tobi: Yeah. How can I be different, how can I contort myself so that you decide you like me? Yes, yeah.

Victoria: Right, which is different, if a client asks you to paint the room blue, okay. Right. But why are you agreeing to paint a room blue if you only paint in pink, in yellow, in orange? And that's what we do. We say, "It's more important that you like me than I be true to myself, that I be authentic, that I show up as me. So, I will just chameleon and shape shift and be someone I'm not in the hopes that you'll say, "You're lovable now. You're worthy now. You're acceptable now." It's okay that you're alive and taking up space, and air, and breathing and having a business, and being a person.

Tobi: Wow. Yes.

Victoria: Wow. What a painful way to live, hey?

Tobi: Yes. And we live in all the time and then we're like, "Why do we feel chronic anxiety? And why am I constantly feeling not happy?"

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Victoria: Yeah, and buffering.

Tobi: Yeah, lots of buffering.

Victoria: All the buffering.

Tobi: All the wine, all the Netflix, all the Facebook.

Victoria: Procrastination.

Tobi: Yeah, overworking. I'm the over-worker bufferer, that's me. If you like me at this level let me work 10 times harder and then you'll really like me.

Victoria: Right. Well, and that's something we do as entrepreneurs, we overdeliver in a self-abandoning way.

Tobi: Yeah. This word self-abandonment is so important here I think. And I think we're constantly doing and don't even realize it. So, what does it look like when we're self-abandoning? And what are some of those kind of telltale signs of what that looks like?

Victoria: Yeah. I did a show recently about self-abandonment and the self-betrayal cycle.

Tobi: On your podcast, right?

Victoria: On my podcast, on Feminist Wellness.

Tobi: Yeah, you have an amazing podcast, yeah.

Victoria: Thank you. Likewise. So, we overdo, we over-function which is again really different. You're in Anchored, I promised you one coaching call a week, you all are getting two. I promised you one breathwork a month, last month you got two. And I do that because I enjoy it. I'm being of service. It feels good in my body. The somatic response in my body is pleasure and joy. It's not exhausting or stressful. And I'm not seeking to convince you to like me. I'm just giving you what I want to give you because I want to give it to you. There's no tit for tat there.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Tobi: There's no have to.

Victoria: Yes, there's no obligation.

Tobi: This word, I have to, the obligation and the I have to, for my entire 30s I think and half of my 40s, the theme could have been, but I have to. Like, "I'm sorry baby, but mommy has to work. Mommy has to go on this trip." I tell my clients, "We have to do this thing for these clients. We have to finish this by Monday." The whole thing was like under the umbrella of we have to which felt horrible. And it was 100% self-abandonment in every way. My health took a toll, my marriage took a toll, my kid, the whole thing.

Victoria: Yeah. And that have to trickles all the way down to how you have to look to be an entrepreneur, the words you have to say, what your copy has to sound like, how you have to show up on Instagram, that you have to text your mother back when she texts you. You don't have to.

Tobi: Or a client.

Victoria: Or a client at 9:00pm on a Saturday.

Tobi: Yes, exactly. And that's happening constantly, lack of boundaries all the way around these creatives. And so often in my coaching program, every week on our calls there is always some version of how do I get back in control of my job? I feel like the client is running the job and it's always about this boundary issue and self-abandonment really, it's what it's about.

Victoria: Yeah. So, the self-abandonment cycle is when we over-give, over-function, overdo in any area of our life with clients, with our work, with our family members, with our parents, our kids etc. And we over-give, and over-give, and we're exhausted. And we're over-giving and we're giving again from that place of if I do everything for you then you will approve of me, validate me, tell me I'm worthy. So, our whole sense of self and worth is hinging on whether the person on the other side says, "You're amazing." So, we over-give and we over-give.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

And we don't get this massive amount of praise that we need to be able to fill that otherwise empty self-worth cup. It's a big ask that we're not actually asking out loud. We're just making this unspoken demand, you need to validate me so I can feel good about abandoning myself.

Tobi: Yeah, oh my gosh, wow. Wow. Yeah.

Victoria: Right, yeah. And so, we're often doing things for people that they didn't ask us to do. They didn't want us to do. They maybe are like, "Oh God, I wish you hadn't done that." An ex of mine's mom would always buy all these really intense gifts that were things nobody wanted. Where she'd every holiday create this huge table with all this décor and these fancy foods. And we were like, "We kind of wanted hotdogs."

Tobi: Pizza would have been nice.

Victoria: Right, pizza would have been a real delight, thank you.

Tobi: You are speaking to the heart of every creative on the call right now.

Victoria: Right, exactly. And so, when the person on the other side of it isn't like, "You are my savior. You're a goddess. You're incredible for doing things I didn't want you to do or didn't ask you to do." And we're resentful. We go into full blown resentment. And resentment is when we take another person's actions or inactions and we make them about ourself, about our self-concept, about who we are in the world. You didn't say that was 110% perfect so you're saying I'm garbage. I'm terrible.

Tobi: Right. Not my food was garbage but I'm garbage.

Victoria: I am garbage. Not the décor was garbage, not the painting job. I am a terrible person. That's what you're saying. That's a core of resentment. So, we resent them. So, what do we do? We blow up. Well, I don't even know why I have you kids over for meals. I don't even know why I do holidays if no one's going to respect me, if no one's going to appreciate me. I'm so unappreciated here. Again, we're taking something personally that has legit nothing to do with us. And then we explode.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

And then particularly for humans socialized as women and the patriarchy, so many of us are taught to be a good girl.

Tobi: Exactly. That's where I was about to go and you went there, yeah.

Victoria: Right, yeah, I love it.

Tobi: No, anger's not okay.

Victoria: Anger's not okay.

Tobi: Explosion is not okay.

Victoria: No. Expressing yourself.

Tobi: No, not okay, yeah.

Victoria: Right, no. You're supposed to silently suffer and seethe.

Tobi: And self-abandon your whole life for the sake of everyone else but not explode or be resentful about it, yes.

Victoria: Of course not. Right, yeah, we're expected to be selfish or selfless rather.

Tobi: Selfless, yes.

Victoria: Selfless. And if you have a want or need, or don't feel like doing something, or have a boundary, you're selfish and that's a bad thing.

Tobi: Absolutely, I mean seriously, that's where you're so tired, I'm so tired of that.

Victoria: So tired, it's so boring.

Tobi: I think that one is so...

Victoria: It's so tired, yeah.

Tobi: Yeah, I'm over it.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Victoria: Yeah, exactly. And so, from there we explode. So, what happens when we explode? Guilt, shame, we get into that shame spiral. And then what do we do to make up for it? Well, we self-abandon, we people please, we over-function, we overdo, we over-produce, we over-give. And it starts the cycle right on up again.

Tobi: Yeah, this is so helpful and so clear because I think a lot of us kind of think we know what codependency is but that's such a perfect description because I can see all the different relationships that that same cycle happens in consistently. And especially interesting for someone – I mean it show up in different ways I'm sure for different personality types. Some people tend to label themselves, I'm more passive aggressive. For me I just am aggressive because I'm Enneagram eight, hardcore, speak your truth kind of person.

But the socialization really does cause a problem there because in some ways I think I'm not really a people pleaser. I am, everyone is, or most of us are at some level unless we've done the work not to be. But it just shows up in a different way. And I think for me I really struggle. The reason I was coming to you is because of all the chronic pain in my body. And what I was starting to notice and read about is, well, if you tamp down your resentment and anger for 20 or 30 years, guess what? Autoimmune issues, fibromyalgia, chronic back pain.

These things start cropping up that we think have nothing to do with emotions. We think our body, I'm getting older. And have no idea the mind body connection and how this stuff can even physically manifest as illness, or not wellness at least. And that's one of the reasons I came to you because I wanted to learn about this practice of using somatics, which you can tell us exactly what that is.

But my understanding was using movement and things through my body to essentially complete that stress cycle instead of just cramming it down and starting to people please again after the shame spiral, right?

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Victoria: Exactly, yeah. Somatics, the term, soma means body in Greek and somatics, our modern understanding of somatics comes from the work of Thomas Hanna, though these are ancient practices that have been long white settler colonialism put a name on it. And it really is just what you said, the work of coming home to our body. So, part and parcel of codependent thinking is living from the neck up. Because we have to get lost in our thoughts, in overthinking.

Tobi: Totally.

Victoria: Right. Because if you're actually present in your body, if you're embodying, you're listening in, you're not going to do the behaviors you do because your body will tell you to stop.

Tobi: Exactly. And I ignored my body again all through my 30s and early 40s, overworking. It would tell me and I would just buffer. I'm like, eat something else, get that inner voice to go away. Get back in my head, try to solve all my problems from the neck up. And I was really 'good' at that for all the years until my body was like, oh, funny, you didn't listen to the whisper. Let's start screaming. We will be heard eventually in some way.

Victoria: Yeah, it will, exactly. Yeah. And so somatics reminds us that we all have the innate inborn capacity to listen to those whispers, to listen to our bodies, and to be in conversation with our bodies. So, in Anchored we do cognitive coaching, we do thought work but we do a lot of somatic coaching which is when I guide you to really listen deeply to your body, to your inner children, to your nervous system. And to be in conversation with the parts of you that were suppressed.

And I want to say this clearly, we suppress our connection with our body for really smart reasons, due to stress, distress, or trauma in childhood because it was modeled for us and our family system, from things we learned in religion, on and on, and on. It's not your fault that you're living from the neck up and there is something that you can do about it. You really can live differently. But you didn't mess up. You didn't ruin your life, you just need new skills.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

You need to reconnect with the skills you were born with because every single baby on this planet, if their tummy says hungry time, they're going to let you know. That somatic experience will be translated into the verbalization they're capable of. And it just gets socialized out of us.

Tobi: Yeah. And I thought for years and I don't remember who I first heard say it and I so related of I kind of voted my body off the island years ago. I was like, no, we don't want to listen to her. Well, and the other thing is the mind, the cognitive, the thought, the thinking, the intelligence is what is idolized in our country. And the body is, gosh, we're taught to disconnect.

Victoria: Yeah, since Descartes, right, yeah.

Tobi: Yeah. Shrink the body, change the body, don't listen to the body. Your body doesn't know when you should eat. Some dude who wrote a book knows when you should eat, and when you should sleep, and what you should eat.

Victoria: What movement you need. What size you should be.

Tobi: Totally. The reason I started disconnecting from my body was not even the stress from business. It was way back at age 10 when I started on the diet mentality journey. But it didn't serve me, that I was so disconnected to it that when I went into running a business and had been so already accustomed to living from the neck up for 20 years that I did more damage. But now we're fixing. It's fixable though, right?

Victoria: Yeah, 100%. Yeah, we just get to recognize, and we get to learn how to map our nervous system. And I think this is a really important part when we are thinking about cognitive work, and the model, and doing thought work is to recognize that there's a circumstance in life. And then your nervous system responds before your brain.

Tobi: Yeah, so important.

Victoria: So important.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Tobi: Because for those of us who were taught life coaching through the model which people have listened to this podcast obviously have heard me talk about the model or about thought work. But that part was kind of left out. And because for me personally being so good at thinking, I assumed my thought came before the feeling. I had just learned to ignore the feeling or the nervous system response for years. And so, I had to relearn how to feel.

And I'm still not even, I mean I'm just a baby infant when it comes to – I have my little baby giraffe legs under me of learning how to really feel my feelings. But I think that you're right, it's so interesting to make sure we realize even before we recognize it, our body, our nervous system is responding in some way.

Victoria: Yeah. And something we say in the polyvagal and the nervous system nerd world which I'm a full nerd in every way, let's be real, Tobi.,

Tobi: Yes, me too. I'm a nerd too, yes.

Victoria: Full on, you are such a nerd my darling, just my greatest compliment so you're welcome. But one of the things we say because science is that story follows state. Yeah. So, if you think about it, if your nervous system is all revved up in what's called sympathetic activation which is fight or flight. Or if your nervous system is collapsed into dorsal shutdown which is the freeze response, deer in the headlight, possum playing possum which in humans looks like, wow, I'm just really overwhelmed.

I just want to isolate and watch Netflix and not ideate, not have new thoughts for my business, not connect with my clients, I'm going to procrastinate from a place of I'm overwhelmed. Or if we're in ventral vagal which is the safe and social part of the nervous system from those three places and there are mixed states, we're going to keep this simple. From those three states we can have the exact same experience in a circumstance and have wildly different thoughts that are fed to us from our nervous system.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Tobi: So interesting.

Victoria: So, the simplest example is a rollercoaster. So, if you're at the top of a rollercoaster and you're in ventral vagal your thoughts are, well, this sounds fun, let's go. If you're in sympathetic which is fight or flight and you're at the top of the rollercoaster your thought will be, what in the eff am I doing here, this is terrible, I hate this, get me down. And then from dorsal or freeze, you'll have the thought, well, I guess I'm just always stuck doing things I don't want to do. I wish I wasn't on this rollercoaster but there's no way for me to get off. I'm just resigned to this. Wow.

Tobi: Wow. And I think I've spent the last, I don't know, 40 years in fight or flight personally. I mean I think that I have a real affinity towards that one. It's the easiest one for me to get into and stay into. I've got to do something about this all from my head. Yeah, so interesting. So, what happens to us physically when we stay in either the fight or flight or the dorsal, I guess, longer than is helpful? Because in real life you're going to move through all three of these even in a day, yeah.

Victoria: Absolutely, yeah. We need to, without sympathetic you wouldn't get out of bed in the morning without a little sweet dorsal energy, those extra five minutes where the comforter feels so, you couldn't enjoy it. There's no savasana without dorsal. And there's no driving a car without a little sympathetic. So never maligning any of the states. So, when we stay in one of the states other than ventral vagal predominantly, it really, it impacts every single part of our body.

Because the vagus nerve which is what controls this system, it's the 10th cranial nerve, the longest nerve in the human body and it enervates or gives nerve function to everything through the middle of the animal. So, these are the systems that runs and thereby the systems that get impacted when we're not coming back to ventral vagus. So, our cognition, our capacity to think properly, thyroid function, swallowing and digestion, so that's the stomach, the small intestine, the large, the whole apparatus and reproductive function, so our endocrine function.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Blood sugar management, hormone management, so pretty much the most important stuff.

Tobi: Yeah. So, it's not an accident that I spent 30 years primarily in fight or flight and now I have hyperthyroidism and I'm constantly trying to keep my thyroid in check. Those are related, are possibly even more likely, yeah.

Victoria: Yeah. It's likely one of the reasons. Yeah, because it makes sense. Let me ask you this, Tobi. If you were being chased by a lion and you were in full sympathetic, would you want your body to digest a cheeseburger?

Tobi: No.

Victoria: No, thank you. Would you want your body to spend energy...?

Tobi: Or I would be the cheeseburger.

Victoria: You would be a cheeseburger, full on Tobi burger, extra cheese, please, no pickles, extra pickles, let's be real. Yeah. And so, your body shuts down everything, shuts down, it downregulates everything that isn't a vital function. When you're being chased by a lion or when you've been chased by a lion for so long that you're collapsed the only things that are vital are heart lungs, heart lungs, blood to the extremities, that's why we get hot in our hands, sweaty palms, that sort of racing feeling.

Because you need to punch so hard or run so fast so you're not going to do anything but that because you're smarter than that, Tobi.

Tobi: Right. And so, when I relate this to business and think about all those years in business it was the bank account's too low, got to start running again. Heart, these things you just described.

Victoria: Let's go, let's go.

Tobi: And this client's upset. And we've got to get this install done, they're going to be mad, there's a party on Friday. We've got to get their house done and constant deadlines, and self-imposed deadlines, and unrealistic

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

deadlines, and most of it was self-imposed. But it seemed so real and I can see why it does now if we're wanting all of our validation from people pleasing.

We're constantly even kind of accidentally or subconsciously creating all of these moments, these deadlines, this fight or flight kind of living because we trained ourselves to think that's the behavior that gets us the validation.

Victoria: Exactly, 100%.

Tobi: Yeah, so interesting, yeah. So, what can people, besides joining Anchored, which I love and absolutely will love. And my gosh, do you overdeliver? And it's just so amazing just to connect with all the other humans in there. It's so interesting to see the variety of people and what they're doing in life and what they come from. And it's really good. But in addition to that or besides that, I would say in addition to, how do you start to unlearn and unwind from these habits? Because you said they were habits, perfectionism and people pleasing which is beautiful.

Because any habit can be changed. They're not our personality. They're not who we are.

Victoria: They're not labels.

Tobi: It's not a gene. It wasn't passed down through in birth from our mothers but it might have been socialized from our mothers or whatever. So how do we start to unlearn and rewire or rewrite different habits?

Victoria: Yeah. So, awareness, acceptance and action. So, we all love to jump to action or there wouldn't be New Year's resolutions. We all love that A-line. What can I do? How can I change it? How can I make it better? Or the inaction of buffering, this will never change, everything's a mess, I'm screwed, it's ruined. We love that action.

Tobi: Yeah, both of those, action and inaction.

Victoria: Action and inaction, we love it.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Tobi: Say two sides, one coin.

Victoria: Exactly. Yeah. And so, what we get to do is really back the bus up and start with awareness because so often and you've been hearing this in Anchored, we don't know what we want. We don't know what we need. We don't know what we desire. We don't remember who we are.

Someone was sharing recently, she's like, "I don't know what I want for dinner. And my boyfriend looks at me and says, "Babe, where do you want to go for dinner?" And I get paralyzed because if I pick a place and then he doesn't like it, then he's going to be mad at me. He won't love me. He'll leave me. I'll die cold and alone on the mountaintop." Three steps away from doom at all times. So, we get to raise our awareness of the thoughts that were habitually happening.

We get to learn to map our nervous system. To have our first question be what state am I in? Where is my nervous system? What are the chemicals that are racing through my bloodstream right now that are leading me to have these habitual thoughts?

Tobi: Yes, that's so interesting.

Victoria: Am I in that adrenalin? Am I in acetylcholine? What's going on? And the other reason I think that's so important is because we love to blame, and shame, and guilt ourselves. And we can pause and remember that this is mammalian. It's so helpful. I'm just an animal. A squirrel might be scared of this moment to and might go into sympathetic and race up a tree. And I'm a human having a thought because I thought that was a lion but it was a text from my dad.

Tobi: Yeah, totally. And I think one of the things that's been so helpful to me is when you can assess the state and then get clarity on it. You can remember that you're safe almost all the time you're actually safe, you're not about to die. You're not in real danger. Because we really kind of think we are in those moments, actual danger, yeah.

Victoria: Yeah, that's where the body goes.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Tobi: And from safety a totally different set of things is available to you.

Victoria: A 100%.

Tobi: Yeah, so good.

Victoria: Yeah. So really raising that awareness of what's going on physically, physiologically what's going on in my mind. What are my inner children saying? And so through somatic practice we start to be able to locate the energy in our body that's driving us. And we learn to listen in and to ask, "Is this adult me talking? Is this thought adult me or is this one of my inner children?"

Tobi: Yeah, which just is what, is that taking us back, just like a need that wasn't met when we were a child and we've kind of held onto it for a long time? That's just all what inner children is. Because some people may think that sounds woo woo. But when you think of it that way it's kind of like I said, from the earlier, these unprocessed traumas, or fears, or things that we've just been collecting our whole lives.

Victoria: Right. And it lives in – you can go woo woo with it if you feel like it but you can also go neuroscience and say that inner children live within the limbic system which is the most evolutionarily ancient part of our human brains, also called the lizard brain or reptilian brain. It's a yes or no binary black and white system. That's a tabby cat. That's a lion. There's nothing in between, stick in the grass, cobra. Death and doom or everything's fine, thank you.

And so, our inner children are patterned in there and they can sound the alarm bell which is they can activate the amygdala which sends us into sympathetic or into dorsal collapse. So that's the nerdy science of an actual brain.

Tobi: Yeah. And that's where a lot of the feeling unsafe maybe comes from. Memories of times that we really didn't feel safe and then we can remind ourselves, okay, I'm actually safe now. I'm in my own home, I'm not in harm's way at this moment.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Victoria: I'm an adult now.

Tobi: I'm an adult, I can make my own decisions. And you can just get really clear on where those thoughts are coming from. So good, so, so good.

Victoria: So good.

Tobi: And I mean, my gosh, you could have – well, obviously you could have a podcast every week like you do on this because there's so much of it which is so great. But I think just starting with this place of giving people permission to start to explore because we have a lot of conversations in my programs about people pleasing and perfectionism. But we're usually trying to solve it through other thoughts or other actions like you said. And rarely are we saying, "Dip into your body." Dance and move, go for a walk.

One of my favorite things, as much as I love all the coaching in Anchored. Truly one of my favorite parts is at the end of coaching, every time that we literally dance it out. And I think I told you recently when I saw you in person that I literally last time had the camera off but I was dancing in the kitchen, and washing dishes, and making juice. And I felt like a different human and I know music moves me in that way. So why am I not – I mean why do I rarely let myself get into that experience?

But now that I know the power of it, totally different. So, what is happening in those moments when we're going either to music or to – you teach some different techniques that are kind of like tapping or feeling. I mean it's not exactly tapping but touching your body, feeling into different parts of your body. What is that? Is it just reminding us that we have a body?

Victoria: Sometimes.

Tobi: And to kind of dip back into it or tell us a little bit about why we would want to learn about this option of somatic practice instead.

Victoria: Yeah. So sometimes it really is like you said, just wait, I do have a body. I've been so focused on my brain, and this keyboard, and this

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

mouse, and I forgot I had a human body. Also, because the energies that we are not expressing, the movement we are not engaging in, does stay stuck in our body as a stress response. So, when we are small or otherwise unable to react to a threat or a perceived threat, you're six, you can't leave the house, go start your own life. Maybe it's unsafe to talk back to an adult.

That was not an option when I was a child, to have my own opinions to say no to a grown up. And actually, I remember the day I first heard, I'm from Argentina and we moved here when I was little. And I went to an American friend's house and she said she didn't want what was for dinner. And I just remember being like, "You can say that?" I was absolutely incredulous.

Tobi: You were like, and you're not going to be smacked for this?

Victoria: Right. You're not going to get [inaudible] side of the head. It hadn't crossed my 10 year old mind that it was possible to say, "I don't want what's for dinner." But anyway, right, so anyway, I digress. So, all those moments in childhood, in adolescence and in our grown up lives where we don't speak up, where we swallow our feelings, where we buffer and we push down the emotions. All that energy gets trapped in our physiology. In the nervous system world, we say the issue is in the tissues.

And what that means is we're holding emotions in our body as tension patterns. And so, it's not like there's sadness in your liver or angry. It's a tension pattern. It's a way of holding your body. We come into this collapsed physiology where our shoulders are rolled forward, our back is rounded, our neck comes forward and we're sort of protecting our tender underbelly emotionally and physically. And so, when you do somatic practices and you can get in touch with those emotions you can allow for completion of whatever action you wanted to take in the moment.

So that doesn't just mean punching pillows and screaming. I actually am not really into that sort of cathartic work. I don't think it gets us where we want to go. And it can be retraumatizing. But how can I play with this tension so I can release it? A lot of practices we do involve balance. So,

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

what does it feel like to be having emotions and to feel my body coming into balance with itself?

And what we're doing is repatterning the neural grooves in our minds that say it's safe to be in my body with myself. It's safe to feel my feelings in my body. It's safe to allow whatever energy is within me to go to completion.

Tobi: Yes. Totally. Yeah, because the more and more I read about things like chronic pain and some of the things I'm dealing with the more I learn that it is all the times that I stopped that stress from moving all the way out of the body, that's likely causing the things that I have now. So interesting.

Victoria: Yeah, the nervous system holds on, yeah.

Tobi: Yeah, that's so interesting. So why don't you tell everybody, we've mentioned the podcast, we've mentioned the program. Let's tell everybody where to find you there and then probably start with maybe listening to the podcast. What would be the great place for them to kind of start? Is there a certain episode or two? If they're like, "I want to know more," I looked back through your podcast when I first found you and started some specific ones that seemed like they were more about what is codependency. And some of these basic things, are those a good place to start?

Victoria: I'd say so, yeah. So, if you go to my website, victoriaalbina.com/podcast, there's a search function. So, if you put the word 'codependent' in there you'll get a bunch. If you put the word 'somatic' in there you'll get a bunch, inner child.

Tobi: Boundaries, inner child.

Victoria: Boundaries, perfectionism, people pleasing, yeah. But don't feel the need to start at episode one. I think it's important to go where you're drawn and what you're called. Yeah, so you can find me at victoriaalbina.com. You can learn more about Anchored there. You can find me on the gram, I give good gram @victoriaalbinawellness.

Tobi: You do give good gram.

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

Victoria: I do, I give good gram.

Tobi: I agree.

Victoria: Thank you, thank you, I appreciate it. The show again is called Feminist Wellness, it's free every Thursday wherever you get your podcasts. And I have a suite of free meditations that are available just for your listeners if they go to victoriaalbina.com/tobi T-O-B-I. Isn't that nice? You can grab those free meditations, yeah.

Tobi: Perfect, yes. And for people who have trouble slowing down to meditate, how do we make room for, because a lot of us are on this hustle bus and we've been on it.

Victoria: Right. So, one of the practices in there, I should say not just free meditations, free practices, is called orienting. And so, it's a really important grounding nervous system practice that we do all the time in Anchored. So, when we are in stress, distress and trauma, whether we're in sympathetic or in dorsal, our bodies forget who, when and where we are. And so, we're flashing back to something. We're future forecasting some kind of doom. We're spinning in negative thoughts instead of being present.

And so, we can use orienting exercises to bring us back to the here and now. And I won't spoil it. Folks can head on over to the website and download that. But that's where I would start, if you're like, meditation's not for me, start with orienting, yeah.

Tobi: Okay, perfect. Well, this was so good. I know it's going to blow so many minds. We will put all those links and everything in our show notes too so people if they're like, "How do you spell Victoria Albina? Or what was her name again?" We'll have it all in there so they can find it. But thank you so much.

Victoria: Thank you so much.

Tobi: This is amazing. Even though I've been working with you or in your program, a lot of your program I hear on recordings and stuff so I don't see

Ep #220: How Codependency Impacts Your Business with Victoria Albina

you all the time. But it has definitely changed so many things for me and been a gift. So yeah, thank you so much for that. And I can't wait to keep digging deeper and deeper. And I know that our audience will love that as well. So, thank you so much.

Victoria: Thank you.

Okay, friends, I hope you loved this episode. There was so much wisdom in it. Be sure and check out Victoria's podcast, is amazing, I listen to it most every week. You can follow her on Instagram, you can check out her website and learn about her class, Anchored that I've been in. It's a six month program with a lot of other amazing women doing incredible things to overcome their patterns of codependency. And really learn how to use their entire body to feel their emotions, to go after their dreams and to make their life exactly what they want it to be. So, I hope you'll check it out.

And I can't wait to see you next week with another fabulous, and I promise it'll be fabulous, episode of the *Design You* podcast. Bye for now.

Thank you so much for listening to the *Design You* podcast, and if you are ready to dig deep and do the important work we talk about here on the podcast of transforming your mindset and creating a scalable online business model, there has never been a more important time than right now. So, join me and the incredible creative entrepreneurs in my *Design You* coaching program today. You can get all the details at TobiFairley.com.