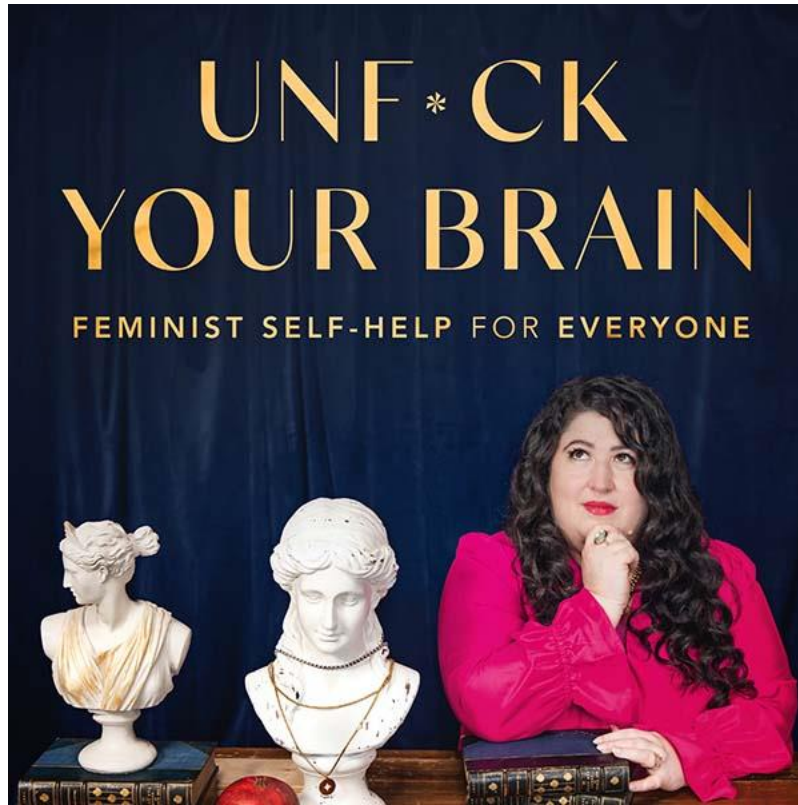


UFYB 327: How to Fail and Get Back Up Again



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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I went to Miami this past week and I had a nice little plan for continuing my resolutions and working on the habits I'm building, but then my travel curse intervened. I'm going to tell you all about what happened, what my travel curse is, and how I handled it in this episode.

Welcome to *UnF*ck Your Brain*, feminist self-help for everyone brought to you by *The School of New Feminist Thought*. I'm your host, Kara Loewentheil, Harvard lawyer turned life coach extraordinaire. And I'm here to help you get society's sexist messages out of your brain so you can be confident, feel powerful and live a life you won't regret when you die.

If you want to jumpstart that process, you need to grab my totally free guide to feeling less anxious and more empowered by rewiring your brain. Just text your email to +1347 997 1784 and use code word, brain or go to unfuckyourbrain.com/brain. Now let's get to today's episode.

Hello, hello, my little achievement chasers. You all have been eating this podcast series up. The download numbers are wild, even for podcasts of my size. So I am loving that I'm doing this series right now in early 2024 because I'm literally living out what I'm teaching and it's given me so many good examples for teaching around this. So I have some health promoting goals I have been working on this year, particularly around taking more walk breaks during my day because I'm getting stiff just sitting and working so much, adding a book.

If you write your own book and you want to sell and market it. That's a second full-time job that I added on top of my, well, at least one full-time job and running my business, which as any business owner knows, often is more than one because you're doing multiple jobs in the business. So it's a lot. Anyway, in an ideal world I would live on a beautiful nature path or something, but I live in Brooklyn. So I bought myself a little walking pad for my office. And so the first two weeks of the year were pretty good. I met my target most of the time.

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And then last week I went to Miami for a week for meetings. I had a two day mastermind meeting with the mastermind I've been in since 2018, which is so wild, where everyone's business was when it started and where we are now. And then I had a two day meeting with my leadership team, in my business and our US facilitator. So it was a lot of long all day meetings and I had a whole plan for how I was going to keep walking. And I booked a hotel right next to a pretty beach path. I scheduled myself time to do it and then my travel curse intervened.

So this is the deal with my travel curse. I don't know who cursed me or why about this. Obviously my life is wonderful in many ways, so I don't consider myself overall cursed but I do have a weird travel curse. The gentleman consort and I, my partner and I have a travel curse where no matter where we go, we bring unseasonably, unreasonably bad weather.

So just to give you one example, last year we went to Morocco and the worst blizzard in 30 years hit while we were driving over the Atlas Mountains. And we almost drove off the cliff multiple times. And once we survived, we survived a six hour crawl back down the mountain on unplowed roads. We almost got stuck at the top, and then we got to the desert on the other side, which is where we were trying to go, where it continued to rain so much for the next three days that it was flooded. The desert was flooded.

And then the road back over the mountains was closed. It was just bananas. So everywhere we go, it's like this, even places, we went to Scotland and Scotland's obviously a rainy country. It rained so much while we were there that the locals were talking about how rainy it was. And then the other part of our curse is the sun always comes out the day that we leave. So that happened in Morocco. It happened in Scotland. And then it just happened in Miami.

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So this curse followed me to Miami and it rained every day that we were there, which made walking outside not ideal, especially since I had not brought any rain gear. And I hadn't brought sneakers or workout clothes for using a treadmill because I thought I was just going to take a little walk in my dress and my sandals outside.

So that happened and I also wasn't sleeping well because the bed was much softer than I'm used to. And my brain has this brain travel curse where the first night that I sleep anywhere new, it wakes me up every hour apparently to make sure we're not getting murdered. I don't know, after the first night it calms down but all in all I was sleeping later than planned, having to go to bed earlier than planned because I needed longer to be in bed since I was going to keep waking up all the time. And it was raining and it just all did not work out.

So we've all had these experiences where life gets in the way of our goals. And in the past this would have been a lot of drama, guilt, shame. I would have just given up. Even when I got home, I would feel like I had ruined it by not doing it. I'd already messed up and I wouldn't have gotten back to it. I would have just let it go. But in this case I had absolutely zero drama about it, and as soon as I came home, I've gotten right back into paying attention to the goal, tracking things in my tracker.

I've had zero drama getting back to it, no recrimination, no guilt, no shame, no self-sabotage. And that's because I've done the work on this goal and every goal I set to make sure that I articulate to myself what the purpose of the goal is in a way that is not about perfection. So if you remember the previous episodes, I've made sure to frame and define the goal as not being to do the thing perfectly or 100% of the time. The goal is to become habituated to doing the thing most of the time.

And because I have prevented perfectionism from attaching to the goal, I came back to it without any baggage. Equally importantly, I was able to

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look at exactly what happened, the circumstances and my thoughts, and learn from my mistakes. So that's what I want to talk to you about how to do yourself today. Because it's the most important criteria, not criteria, it's the most important skill you can have once your goal execution is already underway.

So the single biggest reason that when we fall off the wagon, we stay off the wagon is that we don't learn from our failures. That's the perfectionist thinking. We want to do it perfectly. And even if you've listened to the previous podcast and you've mentally changed your framing of the goal to not be doing it perfectly. If you feel any shame or guilt about when you lapse, then your perfectionist thinking is still getting in your way and it's actually going to sabotage your progress.

Sometimes when we first learn to try to not be a perfectionist, we sort of interpret that as okay, so I won't give up if something doesn't work out. But I'm going to move on as fast as possible and try to ignore the bad feelings and just do better next time. This was a big thing that I talked with my partner about a lot when we first met and we were working through our first conflicts. When he felt hurt or let down by something I said or did, I would want to know exactly what it was that bothered him.

So I could really understand it and I could decide is this a behavior thing that I'm willing to change or would be productive to change? And then I could extrapolate to okay, how do I need to change my thinking to produce a different action if I'm going to do that? But when I was upset, he just wanted to apologize and then say he would 'do better next time'. And it wasn't because he wasn't invested or didn't want to change. It's because his shame and guilt were so strong that he didn't know how to deal with them.

And so he just wanted to vow that it would be different next time because he just really couldn't emotionally stand how he would feel if he really dug

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into what had happened. Because of his thoughts, nothing he was doing was all that grave, but his thoughts were so negative about me being upset or him 'doing something wrong' in his mind. We all have been there.

And it took a few repetitions of this before I was really able to show him, hey, do you see how just vowing to do better hasn't actually changed your behavior? There is another way. The whole reason we act a certain way is because of our thoughts driving that action. So just vowing to do it differently in future is just vowing to not have that thought again. Plus, even if you could just declare you wouldn't have a thought in the future, even if you just order your brain to do that. If you haven't looked into it, you don't even know what thought you're trying not to have.

So you can't just vow to do better next time. You don't even know what thought caused the problem. So many of us make the same mistakes with our resolutions and goals. When we fail, if we manage to get back on the wagon, we're just in a rush to climb back on and we don't pause to take stock and learn from our failures or mistakes. So we end up falling off the wagon again and again in the same damn way, and eventually our brain's like, "I'm giving up, you keep falling off in the same wagon. Nothing's changing here, I'm out."

If you don't put back the tape and really look at what went wrong, how are you going to do it differently in the future? So let's use my Miami walking story as an example. There are a couple of places I went wrong. First of all, I only planned for good conditions. I planned for good weather and I planned to be able to follow my schedule, but I can't control the weather at all. So if I'm really committed to my walks, then I need to plan for any weather outcomes or I need to bring stuff for walking inside or outside or wherever.

I also have to articulate to myself what my commitment is. I could have set a timer and walked around my hotel room while watching TV for 10 minutes

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if I'd really articulated to myself that the commitment is to take the walks no matter what. I also didn't plan for poor rest. Now, this is only semi under my control. I can take all the steps I can try to take to get good rest. I can go to bed at a reasonable hour. I can take magnesium. I can stay off my phone. I can make sure I don't eat foods that give me heartburn at night, whatever.

I can't control something like the bed being too soft. I mean, I could have moved to hotel rooms or something like that after the first one if I was really committed to that. I can't control the fact that my brain always wakes me up the first night in a new place because it thinks we might get eaten. I might need hypnosis for that one. I have tried to tell my brain this. But what I could have done is create a more flexible plan.

So even if I didn't know the exact contingency, I could have marked two to three times in the day for a walk option and just held that space open and just been okay with the fact that I was sacrificing some productivity time. Or if it was really the most important thing for me to get done, I could have changed my schedule. I could have canceled or shortened meetings. I could have postponed work, I was scheduled to create, etc. Now, that stuff wasn't less important than walking to me in that moment, that's up to me. But I could have considered all the options.

So now I've learned so much valuable information about what can happen when I travel. So the next time I travel I won't be thinking, well, I'm sure the weather will be fine or even I hope the weather cooperates or I hope I sleep well. I'll really be planning for the challenges. So this is a perfect example of why you always need mindset and strategy to solve any problem. Just having the strategy doesn't work if your brain is just generating shame and you're mostly motivated to avoid the shame.

But just having self-compassion also doesn't do the job on its own. You need to think analytically about what happened and how to solve for it. I

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think this is the huge missing piece for so many women who are trying to change something about their lives.

The ability to have enough self-compassion, to tolerate failing and the analysis to see what went wrong and change it is what got me from zero business experience to being a multiple seven figure CEO. From an idea to a major book deal. From hating my body to loving it. From being a dating hot mess to being engaged to someone amazing. The list goes on and on. Everything I've created came from a version of this process of learning from what didn't work and changing my approach.

And as you can see, I am still using it. I'm using it on things that are big and ambitious, like trying to get my book on the bestseller list. And I'm using it on things that might seem simple to other people. Some people have no problem taking a walk every day, but for me are a big goal and I have no shame about that. So you might be trying to launch a company or you might be trying to stop watching so much Netflix. Whatever it is, this process of failing and reflecting and adjusting is the key.

Next week, we're gonna be taking a little bit of a break from this topic, and I'm going to be speaking to my friend, Rachel Hart, who is an incredible coach who helps people change their relationship with their drinking, and she's gonna be telling us about the Drink Archetypes, which is a brand new framework that she has created that really helps you understand your drinking, really any substance or activity you're using to numb out.

So that's gonna be a super fruitful, interesting conversation, and I promise that even if, like me, you don't drink at all, you're using something to manage your emotions. And that's not inherently bad, but you want to understand what you're doing and why so you can work with it if you want to.

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But then the week after that, I'm gonna finish up this series on goal setting, goal achieving, and getting back on the wagon. We unfortunately have had to cancel the Get Back on the Wagon Challenge. So if you did register, you'll be getting an email about that. But I am going to share with all of you what I was going to be teaching in that challenge.

It was gonna be only for paid participants, but now you're all going to get to learn the Fail Forward Review Process, which is what I use to diagnose from and learn from a failure. So I'm gonna be sharing that on the episode after, so not next week, but the week after. And then we're gonna be done with this goal setting resolution series, and we'll be turning our attention to new thought work frontiers. Alright, my friends. Have a beautiful week.

If you're loving what you're learning on the podcast, you have got to come check out *The Feminist Self-Help Society*. It's our newly revamped community and classroom where you get individual help to better apply these concepts to your life along with a library of next level blow your mind coaching tools and concepts that I just can't fit in a podcast episode. It's also where you can hang out, get coached and nerd out about all things thought work and feminist mindset with other podcast listeners just like you and me.

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