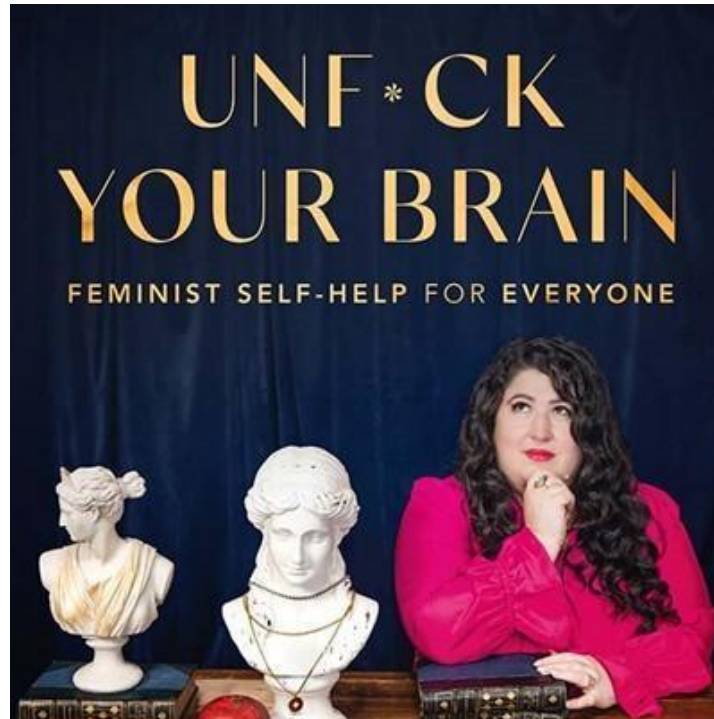


UFYB 37: Self Love 2.0



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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Welcome to Unf*ck Your Brain. I'm your host, Kara Loewentheil, Master Certified Coach and founder of The School of New Feminist Thought. I'm here to help you turn down your anxiety, turn up your confidence, and create a life on your own terms. One that you're truly excited to live. Let's go.

Hello my chickens. So I was just reading - I read all of the applications for Unf*ck Your Brain personally, and I was just reading one that said - it was from someone who said she doesn't like the fluff but she likes my teachings. So I actually am not sure what the fluff is because I feel like I'm a lot less woo-woo, but I think maybe she means the part in the beginning where I like, talk about what's going on with me.

So if you don't like that, feel free to forward, y'all. You do not have to listen to what's going on in my life. I just like to share because I feel like you guys use my work in your lives and you sort of are like, listening to me in your head and I just kind of like to, I don't know, share what's going on with me and make it a little bit more personal, and I wish I could hear what was going on with all you guys. But I will not be offended if you do not like fluff. Please feel free to forward.

Okay, there's going to be less fluff today because I've been thinking about it. So here's what we're going to do today. I want to talk about self-love 2.0. So I talk about self-love on the podcast all the time. Obviously, it's kind of what we do around here. But today I want to do something a little bit different because I want to talk about the top three - what I call thought errors that women have when it comes to loving themselves and working on creating their own happiness.

I like to think of them as thought errors because I just like to imagine that like, the wiring got crossed, or like, somebody made a mistake in the algorithm. Like, you program the computer to save and instead it like,

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deletes the file. Like, there's a system error happening, so I like to talk about it like a thought error.

And I think there are three top thought errors that really hold women back from doing the work that they would need to do to become truly happy and really accept and love themselves. And it's so important to identify these because if you don't, they are driving your behavior without you even knowing.

So you may say to yourself that you want to love yourself, you want to feel better, you want to be more confident. But if you have any of these thought system errors running in the background, you're going to have a really hard time making progress because your brain is working against you the whole time, but it's subconscious so you don't even know it.

It's really amazing, like, how our brains will bend and twist to avoid admitting that they are the problem or they are wrong. It's almost like you have a corrupt government in power and it's indoctrinated you so that you don't try to replace it. And because their subconscious, we don't even know that they're happening.

I think often my clients are surprised to find out what's in there, even if they've been practicing thought work like I teach it on the podcast. Because when it's subconscious, it doesn't come up until something forces it up. Like you try to take time to yourself during the day to work on your thoughts, or you set aside time to do a coaching program, or you spend money on your emotional or mental health, that's when all of a sudden, these thoughts kind of will rise to the surface.

But if you haven't done those things then nothing has forced those thoughts up. So they're just operating back there like, totally unrestrained without you even knowing. And they maybe stymieing your progress. So even if you think you're all in on creating more confidence and more self-esteem, I

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want you to listen to this podcast with an open mind and see if you can spot any of these thought errors in your own brain. And then think about how they might be shaping your efforts to improve your mind and your life.

So here's the number one, the number one dream killer. I don't want to get arrogant or self-absorbed. If I love myself too much, what if I just get arrogant? What if I become self-absorbed? What if I become a narcissist? This is the first and most common one, I think. I hear this from my clients all the time.

So here's what I want you to think about, this is going to blow your mind. When you hate yourself, who do you spend a lot of time thinking about? If you didn't say yourself, I want you to listen to the question again. When you hate yourself, who do you spend a lot of time thinking about? Yourself. That's who you think about all the time. Being self-loathing is way more self-absorbed than being self-loving.

When you are self-loathing, all you fucking do is think about yourself. What you said, what you did, how you look, what you ate, how you acted, what mistakes you made, how you have to change to be perfect, what decisions you might screw up, right? All you're doing is thinking about yourself all the time. You're a 24/7 self-focused, self-loathing machine.

So wherever you are right now in this journey, I can guarantee that you think about yourself way more now than you would if you loved yourself. When you love yourself, you actually don't think about yourself that often. It's weird. You just have like, this background level of acceptance and love and respect for yourself.

Like, think about a good friend you have. You love your friend but you don't think about her constantly. You're not like, constantly replaying everything she said or did or what she wore, how she looked, or what decisions - like, you love her, you really only think about her when you're hanging out with

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her or you know, if something reminds you of her, then you just are like, "Aw, I love her," and then you go back to whatever else you're doing.

That's what it's like when you love yourself. It's not like, you know, the Greek myth, it's not Narcissus in the pool. You're not constantly standing around just stroking yourself. Well, that sounds weird. I mean, I'm all for masturbation but you know what I mean, right? When I didn't love myself, I was constantly thinking about myself and how inadequate I was. That was my main topic in my life was what was wrong with me.

Now that I love myself, I really only think about myself if I do so on purpose or to set goals, or to appreciate myself for my accomplishments, or occasionally when I need to coach myself and then I see that some self-critical thoughts are in there. It's got to be like, 1/100th of the amount of time I used to spend thinking about myself.

So this idea that if you love yourself, you'll become self-absorbed and arrogant and narcissistic, it's the complete opposite. Right now, you are thinking about yourself more than you need to because you're so self-critical. If you learned to love yourself, you will think about yourself so much less. Like, just imagine what you could do with all that brain energy.

The people who you see around you who you think are arrogant, they're usually actually immensely insecure. That's what makes them posture. And some of it is just socialization. I think men are socialized to cover insecurity with posturing and like, puffery, and women are socialized to just self-deprecate.

But people who you think are arrogant or full of themselves, there's two things going on. Either one, they actually just love themselves and they set appropriate boundaries and like themselves, and you find that triggering because you don't do that, and so your brain is like, upset about it, or they

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are putting on a big front about how great they are but it's really because inside they feel so insecure.

When I was self-loathing, I didn't think I was good enough, I was very concerned that everyone else think I was amazing. It really mattered that people know that I was smart, that I went to good schools, that whatever. Whatever it is that I thought was good about me or mattered. Now that I love myself, I don't really care. I don't spend that much time thinking about myself and I don't spend that much time thinking about what other people think about me. It's the opposite. And I have created so much more to share with the world.

And so that's what leads to my next thought because system thought error, thought system error, either one, number two that I see most often and is the most damaging is the thought that it's selfish or self-indulgent to spend time, to spend energy, to spend money thinking and talking about yourself when that only benefits you.

Because you know what? When you're self-loathing and you're focused on yourself all the time, you know what you're not focused on? Other people. Where you are now is actually - I don't believe in the word selfish because I just think that that's like, a word that women use against themselves. It doesn't really mean anything. But if that were really a thing, if being selfish was a thing, you're more selfish now. You're more self-absorbed and more self-focused now. Now you care about other people more in the sense that like, are they going to validate you, what do they think about you, like, it's all really self-referential and self-focused.

I see this with beginning coaches all the time. When they're thinking about themselves and whether they're good enough or smart enough, or their clients will like them, they get all stuck. They obsess about themselves and they don't produce anything. When I coach them into believing in

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themselves, then they can focus on their clients and their audience, and they create so much more value and they help other people so much more.

When you are spending a lot of time and energy doing what other people want you to do, you may think that that's unselfish. But the reason you're doing it is so that you can tell yourself, "Oh, I'm not selfish, it's okay." It's still for you. You're using those other people to try to give you an emotion that you want. You want them to validate you, or you want to be able to think something about yourself. They're just pawns in your game.

It's like when we think, "Oh, I need to lie to this person to be kind to them." You're not being kind to them. You're telling them a lie. But you just don't want to confront the thoughts and feelings you'd have if you told them the truth and how that would be uncomfortable. So all of the stuff you do that you think is for other people, and so you think, "Oh, if I took that time and energy back and focused on myself, that would be selfish," is the exact opposite. Right now you're just using other people as like, green screens for your own drama with yourself. You're actually not able to show up for them because you're all in your own head about yourself.

When you learn how to manage your mind and how to love yourself, you have so much more energy to give back to the world. And you don't have to be a coach or an entrepreneur for this to be true. Just think about anything in your life. Your job, your family, like, if you're a doctor, when you're obsessively thinking about whether you're as good as that other doctor in your practice, what do your patients think about you, are you bringing a lot of value to your institution? Are you showing up? Can you really focus on your patients when you're thinking all the time in the background whether you're a good doctor and whether they like you? No.

What about when you're criticizing yourself for being a bad mother? Does that help you be present and engaged with your kids? No. When you're thinking about how you do a bad job at anything, you're checked out and

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you do a bad job, right? When you're thinking about how you're a bad mom, you're checked out and you're not attentive to your kids.

So learning how to manage your mind and investing the time and the energy and the resources in managing your mind, even if that means your kids are going to watch TV for an hour, even if that means you're going to invest the money in that instead of as fancy of a vacation, even if that means you're going to have to leave the office a little bit earlier, all of that is the best thing you can do for not just yourself, anyone else who shares your life with you.

I mean, they don't know that, right? They think they just want your time and energy now. But you know that because you are focused on your own self-loathing, you're never really able to 100% show up for anyone else in your life. So your boss, your colleagues, your clients, your family, your friends, anyone in your sphere of influence who shares your life, learning how to manage your mind is not selfish and self-indulgent. It doesn't only benefit you. It benefits everyone else too because you can show up in your life in such a different way.

And I hear this guilt so often from women, especially who are married or have kids and think that it's selfish to take time or money "away from their family" for themselves, and serious air quotes, you guys. Because that's just to me like, such a just absorbed patriarchy way of thinking about it. Why is your family entitled to all of your time more than you are anyway?

But even so, if you ask your kids, listen - imagine it's adults, not three-year olds. Is it worth it for me to spend some time and resources on myself so that I can love you more and be more accepting and more present with you for the next 30 years, would they say yes? Is that in their best interest? Of course.

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And you don't need to have kids or a spouse to see this. Just think about how you show up in the world as a friend, as a colleague, as a boss. Managing your mind as a boss, so important. As a potential romantic partner, if that's something you're looking for. How would you relate to others if you had confidence and compassion instead of insecurity and taking everything else personally? Would that benefit and improve the lives of the people around you?

What if you have a secret dream of something you want to create? Whether it's wanting to be a coach or an artist or an entrepreneur, would the world benefit from you going after your dreams? It's so myopic and it's such a symptom of the self-loathing to think that using our own time and resources to invest in being happy or for ourselves is somehow selfish and is somehow a detriment to other people. It's not. It's to their benefit, even if they don't know it.

I absolutely have clients all the time, whose bosses like, want them to stay late or do things immediately. I actually had a client who was really terrified of her boss, and he's like, a yeller and you know, just very dramatic, and he would always be interrupting her to like, want her to do things immediately. And through our work, she stood up to him once, and she said like, "Listen, no, I have to do this, I have to prepare for this, I'm going to do this thing that you knew I was doing, I'll do that later." And he like, huffed and puffed and screamed but she stood her ground and she like, prepared for the thing she needed to do and she did the other thing later, and afterwards he actually thanked her for holding that boundary. Because her work was better because she did that.

So that is what happens, that's the magic. Other people may not even know it's for their benefit at first, but they're going to experience the benefit afterwards. I actually had a client the other day say to me that one of the reasons she felt good investing in working with me was that she knows that I make so much coaching content and value free through the podcast, and I

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have free downloads and sometimes I do webinars, I just put a lot of free content out there, and she likes to think of investing in coaching as being not just for herself but for the benefit of all the other women who truly can't afford it.

I hear from women on fixed income and social security and with five children with all, you know, special needs. There's a lot of people who listen to the podcast who can't afford to invest in coaching. And she feels like she's subsidizing the help that I provide to people who never could pay me.

I love that, I thought that was so beautiful because it's such an example of the shift in her thinking. She went from seeing signs only of her own selfishness to seeing the way that her working on herself enriches the lives of the people around you, and people you don't even know. And this is true whether you work with me or not. I mean, this is just true about your own thought work.

Taking half an hour to do your own thought work, even though you could theoretically spend it with your kids or even though your husband wants to talk to you about his day or you're going to miss the TV show you guys watch together, or you're going to do that work project tomorrow, taking that little bit of time for yourself, not only are you worth it, not only are you actually entitled to all of your own time and you're giving a lot of it to other people and you can use some of it for yourself, but it's actually to everyone else's benefit.

So I spend a long time on this one because it's such deep socialization for women, and it's so important to notice it happening in your brain. People who are socialized and raised as men in, at least the Western world, do not generally worry that it's selfish to spend money or time on themselves. I'm not saying none of them do, but like, taking in the aggregate, they're not taught to think that. They aren't raised to believe that everyone else is more entitled to their time and their energy and their money than they are.

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This is so important, you guys. Your guilt over investing in yourself, again, doesn't have to have anything to do with money. Just your own time and your own energy is not a true signal that you're being selfish. That guilt is a feeling that is created by patriarchal ideology that your brain has absorbed and is parroting back to you like it's an original true thought.

And some of you might not use the word selfish. You might think frivolous or silly. It's the same thought though. It's the catch 22 of being a woman in this society. Like, if you spend money on your appearance, you're vain and frivolous. But if you don't, you're not taking care of yourself. We have all these socialized catch 22s, and frivolous is such an incredibly gendered word. You never hear it applied to men and how they spend their time or money.

You're like, why is golf a very serious interest and not a frivolous waste of time and thousands of dollars? Only because the patriarchy says so. So investing your time and energy and yeah, your financial resources too, in improving your mental and emotional health is the opposite of frivolous. It's literally the most important thing you can spend your money on. And yeah, that might mean hiring a coach, or it might mean hiring a babysitter so you can spend an hour like, working through the podcast and practicing something I teach you, or that someone else teaches you.

There's a lot of different ways that we can invest in ourselves and create that time and space. You know, it's literally to me, the most important thing you can spend money on. And when I was writing this, I was like, well, what about your physical health? Maybe that's more important, maybe this is secondary. But I actually am not even sure that's true because so many things impact our physical health, many of which we can't totally control. We get older, like, systems break down, sometimes we get sick for no reason, but we can always control our thoughts and feelings about our physical health.

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So our physical health will naturally change over time and most likely decline as we get older, but our mental and emotional health doesn't have to. So I truly think it is the most important thing. If you're in peak physical condition but your mind is a mess, what's the point? What's the value of that peak physical condition? Just so that you can live longer feeling crazy and miserable.

Whereas if you manage your mind, no matter what's happening with your body, and I say this as somebody with like, a chronic condition. If you manage your mind, then you can be happy no matter what's happening with your body. So I really think the mental and emotional health is the most important thing.

Okay, so this is number three. Third and final thought system error. Alright, here it is, I know you all think this. If I like myself, I'll just get lazy and not accomplish anything. So I find that most of my clients have listened to my podcast and they know they're not supposed to think this. They've heard me say this before. So it usually - they pretend they don't think it, or maybe they really think they don't, but then about a month or two into the work, they start making real progress and then their brains freak out and this like, truth finally comes out that they still believe this.

So many women believe that they are secretly lazy and that it's only their internal mean girl that keeps them motivated and not just living on the couch. Here's the truth you guys, it's the exact opposite. You feel lazy because you are emotionally exhausted, and you are emotionally exhausted because you are criticizing yourself and scaring yourself all day long inside your own head.

Remember the flight or fright mechanism that creates stress and anxiety and fear? That's supposed to only have to happen like, once every few weeks when something wants to eat you. It's not supposed to be

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happening all day every day. But that's what we've created, chronic stress all day every day. So of course you're exhausted.

If you stop yelling at yourself, you're going to have more energy to do the things that matter to you, and you're going to learn how to stop forcing yourself to do things. You're going to learn how to change your thoughts so you can more easily do the things you want to do. And you're going to change your thoughts to let go of the things you really don't want to do without feeling guilty or selfish. Because some of you are also exhausted because you've completely overloaded your calendars because you don't know how to say no or set any boundaries.

So most of you think you've achieved what you've achieved because of your high stress and anxiety. You think that's causal. I was stressed so I achieved this. But what if you've achieved all of it despite your anxiety and stress? Like, really think about that. What if you basically have been running through quicksand not even knowing it was quicksand? How fast would you be if we got rid of the quicksand? What would you achieve if you weren't stressed and anxious?

If you've been achieving in spite of the stress and anxiety, it's been holding you back and you've been trying to shove that boulder up hill, if we get rid of the boulder, how fast are you going to run up that hill? I had a pretty prestigious career as a lawyer when I was driven by stress and anxiety. But it pales in comparison, in scope, and in impact, and in satisfaction to my career as a coach, and I'm only two years into this career, and I had 10 years as a legal career.

And my career as a coach has to be driven by positive emotion. I could never have created what I have using anxiety and stress as the fuel. I want you to think about anxiety and stress like coal. You can burn it. It will keep you moving for a while. Everybody does when they don't know any better. But eventually, if you keep burning it, you're going to choke to death on the

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pollution that it creates, and you're probably going to smother everything else around you with smog also. Like, look back at photos of the industrial revolution and what everything looked like covered in black ash. That's what it's like.

So if you want to create renewable, sustainable energy that isn't toxic to you and everyone else, and that powers you into the life that you want to live and the world you want to create, you have to change your fuel. You can't keep running on coal. You can't keep running on self-loathing and anxiety and fear.

Self-love and self-acceptance and self-esteem, those are like the cleanest renewable energy in the world. Those lead to exponential growth, to achievement, and to contribution to the world around you. That's what thought work creates. Such a huge impact in outcome for you and for the world and it all starts in your own little brain.

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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