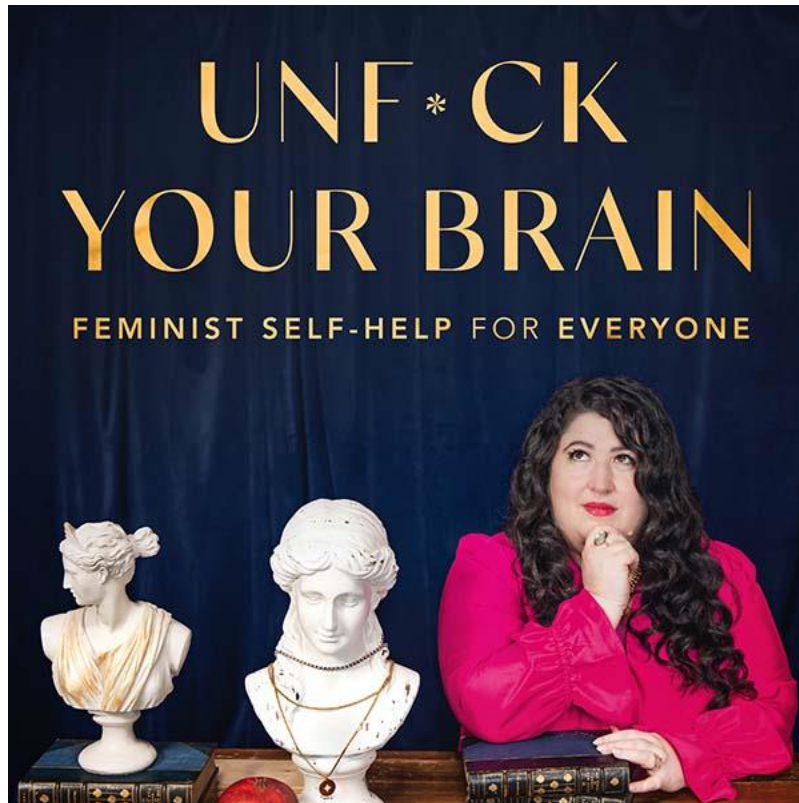


UFYB 340: How to Change Your Brain & Beliefs (Feminist Mindset Principles Ep 6)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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This episode is about the holy grail of thought work, how to literally change the beliefs in your brain. It's the secret to life but it's also hard as fuck sometimes because sometimes our brains don't want to change. In today's episode I'm going to teach you the one crucial skill you must have in order to successfully change a thought and the biggest brain block to look out for when you're trying to do just that.

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 friends. This episode is all about the key thing I think most of you are here to learn, which is how to actually change your brain. If you did not listen to last week's episode on how to handle your feelings in a more helpful way, let's say, please go do that. Here's why. If you are really reactive to your feelings, if your nervous system is really activated, you cannot actually learn very well.

You can learn very blunt lessons about life and death for sure like that's where the lion hides that I should run away from. But you can't learn higher level concepts and your brain can't focus on reprogramming and changing beliefs when you are feeling really reactive. So last week's episode was all about how to get your body calm enough for your brain to actually be able to work properly, which is crucial background. Assuming that you are able to access your prefrontal cortex, the part of your brain that can reason, then you can start to work on changing your thinking.

So remember our episode on the premises of thought work, one of the key premises was that thoughts do not have moral value. And in that episode I

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explained what creates our thoughts. And I said that what creates our thoughts is a combination of nature and nurture. There are evolutionary biology predispositions to think certain ways that humans share. The negativity bias, for example, where your brain is more likely to hold on to negative experiences because that has a survival benefit. It's more important to remember the one dangerous thing than 10 fun things.

There are genetic predispositions based on the specific genetics of your family and ancestors. These are created over time by mutations, combinations of genetics of people who have had children with each other, even some epigenetic changes created by experiences your ancestors may have had.

There are individual nurture experiences in your family of origin or in your early life that teach you to think a certain way or that turns certain genes on or off. And they're all the cultural and social narratives and lessons and beliefs that shaped your brain from the very beginning. That's what we focus a lot on in this podcast, in my book, *Take Back Your Brain*, in the Feminist Self-Help Society, my coaching program. Anywhere I am, this is what we're focusing on.

When you come out of the womb, you have instincts to nurse, to cry, but not much else. Everything else that you believe you learn from what people say or do or what you see in your community and the media you consume among your friends, your family, etc. So think of all of your experiences, all of the messages you've absorbed, all the things you were told implicitly or explicitly like they are contributing tiles to a mosaic. Your brain picks up all of those tiles and combines and recombines them to create your thoughts.

Sometimes there's a whole chunk of pattern, it just picks up exactly how it is and puts in the mosaic. Sometimes it does a little remix, shakes the tiles

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up and moves them around. But essentially it's creating thoughts from everything it learned, sometimes with a little bit of your own creative spin on it. The really important thing to know about your brain is that the mosaic it is most interested in creating is a mosaic that tells the future.

Your brain is a prediction making machine. It is not a truth telling machine. It is not a fact finding machine. It is not a what's the most helpful thing I can say machine. It is a prediction making machine. Your brain wants to predict what will happen because if it knows what will happen, then it thinks it is safe.

This is not a great system because often your brain picks a really upsetting imagined future or an upsetting certainty and convinces you it will happen. And you don't actually feel safe at all emotionally, when that's going on. But your brain is predisposed to just want certainty above all else whether that's helpful or useful or not. So once your brain has decided it has an idea about the world, it's often not very interested in changing it. The longer it's been thinking it, the more true it seems in your brain, but thoughts can be changed.

The biggest key to changing your thoughts is understanding that the action you need to take, the skill you need to have is not to stop thinking whatever thought you want to change, it is to start thinking something new. Your brain has neural pathways. These are actually little physical structures, they're connections between nerve cells in your brain that transmit chemicals. So when you want to change a thought, you can't just tell your brain to stop using the little road that it's already built.

You have to build a different new road and consciously direct the traffic down that road over and over until the new road is really strong and the old road withers away. This also explains why you cannot just convince

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yourself to stop thinking something. It's why insight alone usually does not produce a new thought right away, especially if you're new to thought change. It's why often somebody apologizes and you are still mad, or you find out you are wrong about something and you still feel anxious or upset.

It's like seeing there is a road doesn't make the road disappear, your brain still doesn't have any other road. There's nowhere for the chemicals to go if you don't build them a new path, a new road. So how do we build a new thought pattern? How do we build a new road? We have to literally pick and practice a new thought we want to think. You're allowed to believe literally anything you want, no one can stop you. You can just pick a new thought, whatever it is, and think it.

Sounds simple and on some level it is, but there is a catch, because your brain has subconscious blocks of this that will trip you up and prevent you from changing your thoughts if you don't know how to overcome it. That's what we're going to dive into next.

So let's talk about why it's not as easy as it sounds to just pick a new thought and believe it instead. There are actually two problems, one with picking the thought and one with thinking it. The problem with picking the thought is that society has taught us what to believe about ourselves and what we are allowed to believe about ourselves. And so when we try to come up with new thoughts we're running up against a lot of societal conditioning, societal conditioning that tells us who we are allowed to be and what is possible for us.

If you've been taught by society for decades that if you gain weight, your partner will no longer be attracted to you, it's going to be hard to even come up with a weight neutral thought about your body or your attractiveness,

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much less believe it and it doesn't matter how often your partner tells you that they are.

If you've been taught by society for decades that women are not the brains or the strategy, they're just the worker bees, then when you're trying to come up with a more powerful thought about your career possibilities, it won't even occur to you to brainstorm thoughts about being an industry changer or being a brilliant visionary. If you have been taught by society for decades that it's sad and pathetic if you don't get married, you may not even think to imagine thoughts about being happy and single because you don't even believe that's possible.

So socialization constrains the types of thoughts we can even think to imagine, which is why it's so important to understand social messages we have absorbed. And that is what I go really deep into in my book, *Take Back Your Brain*. If you aren't aware of those belief systems, you aren't going to spot them as blocks when you're trying to come up with new beliefs.

It's also why being in a community of other women who are coming up with new powerful beliefs and creating new, amazing outcomes is so good for your brain health and such a positive impact on your self-conception. So that is a shout out for all of you Feminist Self-Help Society members out there who are being those examples for each other. And if you want to meet and hang out with other women who are doing this work in person, then you're going to want to come to one of the book tour parties that I am throwing, which you can find at unfuckyourbrain.com/tour. That's unfuckyourbrain.com/tour. You can grab a ticket there and come hang out with us and expose your brain to new ways of thinking.

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So coming up with a thought is the first hurdle. The second problem is that even once you've chosen a new belief, your brain thinks that it has a lot of evidence for the belief it already has. Because your brain has been collecting evidence for the belief it has ever since it has believed them. Remember when I said that the brain is a prediction making machine? Your brain would rather be certain than be helpful. It would much rather be certain than be nuanced.

So when you start trying to believe something new, your brain has so much evidence to the contrary and it screams it at you. It's cherry picked evidence, it's not objective, but it's hard to see that, because your brain literally filters out things it thinks you don't need to see or know about. That's why you can't see your nose. Your eyes actually do see your nose, but your brain filters it out of your visual field. That information, a light bouncing off your nose does go into your eyes, but your brain, when it is constructing what you see, just blurs it out.

Your brain presents you with a very curated version of reality, even in terms of things like sensory information that you would think is objective. And it's even more curated when it comes to how you interpret things around you. So imagine it's like your brain was out in the world for years and imagine the world is full of red and green flowers, but your brain believes that all flowers are red, so it only saw red flowers. It only collected red flowers. It has no memory of there being green flowers at all.

The solution to this problem is to make sure that you don't try to believe something too big all at once. It's too much to tell your brain that there aren't equal number of green flowers or maybe there are even more green flowers than red ones. Your brain is not ready for that usually. We have to start with just opening your mind to the possibility that there are any green flowers at all, even just one out there.

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That's why the practice I call the 10% less shitty thought is so, so important. Because your brain is not ready to believe that there are endless abundant green flowers and that you can find them all. It's hard work for your brain at the beginning to believe there's even one green flower, so we have to start with really basic small shifts in belief that we can practice to literally create new neural connections in your brain. New little neurons holding hands, holding little neuron fronds and passing the chemicals down their little chain.

We have to change what we see as even a possibility to believe by becoming aware of all of our internalized limiting beliefs we got from society and by exposing ourselves to new, more positive visions of what women could believe about themselves. And then we have to practice building our way step by step towards those beliefs.

If you want to take this deeper and get a lot more in depth on both of these practices, learning how to uncover the societal messages that are holding you back and how to change your thoughts with that step by step approach. There's so much more to teach than I can do in a podcast episode.

But this is the best time to pre-order my book because it's releasing in just a couple of weeks. So if you pre-order now it will be in your hot little hands before you know it and you can really get deep into this work. When you pre-order this week, you are going to get an instant download of an incredible conversation I had with several academics and coaches who are experts on relationships.

And I think this is really crucial because one of the places that I see a lot of, let's call it green flower blindness is when we are thinking about what kinds of friendships and romantic relationships are available to us. And whether

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other people like us, find us desirable, find us lovable, this is just a place that brains form their beliefs when we are really young and cherry pick evidence over and over for years.

So when you pre-order the book just this week, you have to pre-order by midnight your time zone, May 5th on Sunday. You will get this conversation I had with Dr. Marisa Franco, who is the author of The New York Times bestselling book, *Platonic*, all about the science of attachment and how it can help you have better friendships. Sade Curry, who is an incredible dating coach, master coach, and certified as a feminist coach. And Maggie Reyes, who was also a master coach and also a certified feminist coach who is the best marriage coach in the entire world.

And so the three of them and I had a really deep, insightful, important conversation about how socialization shows up in all these different relationships in our lives. So those of you who struggle with anything in your platonic or romantic relationships, you are really going to want to get access to this training, this resource, but you've got to pre-order by midnight Sunday. So if you haven't pre-ordered yet, now is the time baby, you're going to get this amazing bonus, you're going to be all set. You are going to be ready for when the book comes out so it will get to you fast.

You're not going to have to fight for one of the last few copies at your bookstore. You can pre-order by going to unfuckyourbrain.com/book, or text your email to +1347 997 1784. And when you're prompted, the code word is book, or go to unfuckyourbrain.com/book.

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

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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. It's my favorite place on Earth and it will change your life, I guarantee it. Come join us at www.unfuckyourbrain.com/society. I can't wait to see you there.