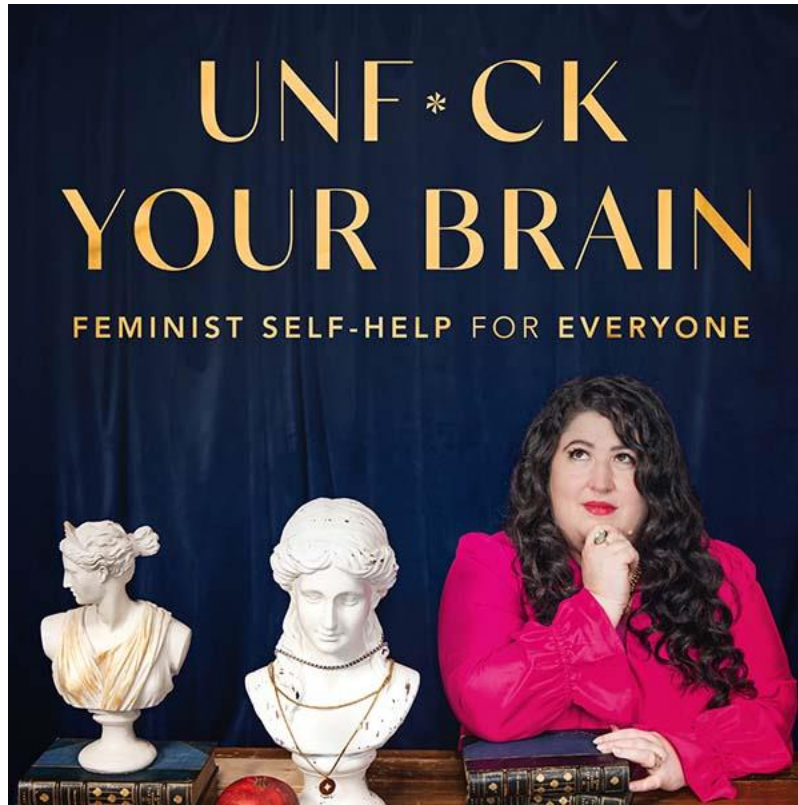


UFYB 347: Confidence, Happiness & Self-Safety



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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How do you know if you're happy, not just in the momentary feeling, the emotion of happy sense but in the big picture, is this the life I want and will I have regrets when I die sense? In this episode I'm going to share what I think is required for a happy life in the big picture sense and why it sometimes means not feeling happy in the short term.

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.

Last night I went to my good friend Lily's book party. Her book is called, *Thank You, More Please*. And it's the feminist dating book I wish I had a decade ago. She was on the podcast last week. So, you should all check that out. But in any case, last night was her release party. And I asked her how she was feeling and she said, "I mean, I'm so happy, but also I'm so tired and I'm glad I'm here, but I also want to go home and be alone. Is that normal?" And I was like, "Yeah, very normal." Because of course I just went through this myself a few weeks ago.

And I know that a book launch is a perfect example of the kind of thing that people think will bring them that small h happiness, the temporary emotion of happiness. But in fact, most of the process does not feel happy at all. It's a lot of work. It can be dispiriting and discouraging. It's challenging. It's a ton of investment in something you hope will pay off in a certain way. It's not a little h, small scale, happiness experience most of the time.

But for me, for Lily, it is part of the big H Happiness, the happiness that means I'm satisfied and content with my life, because I'm living it to the fullest and I'm living in such a way that I won't regret my choices when I die. So, we've talked about that little h, happiness, the temporary emotion

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in the last episode and why rest and pleasure are such an important part of creating more happiness in your life.

And today we're going to talk about the big H Happiness, the happiness of a life well lived, where you are deeply satisfied. Now, of course, your emotions are caused by your thoughts. You can create the emotions of happy and satisfied no matter what you're doing. But since society socializes women to play small and make do, I always want to push back on that being our default or our first reaction to things.

I do think it's valuable to change our thinking to create happiness wherever we are. If we don't learn to do that, our brain will not learn to create it anywhere else either. But I also don't want women to use thought work to make peace with circumstances because they don't believe they can do better or have what they want, or they don't deserve more than what they have.

It's very different to learn to create happiness with your mind because you want to be able to experience happiness whenever and wherever you are. Versus doing it because you believe that wherever you are and whatever you have in your life is your only option and so you better learn to be happy with it. Those motivations are very different and they feel very different. One feels powerful and free and one feels meek and resigned.

So, let's stipulate, as lawyers would say, that your thoughts are what will determine if you're satisfied with your life. If you're content with the choices you've made. If you are creating pride and fulfillment with your brain, or creating regret and recrimination. But nevertheless, I think it's important to think about what type of life we really want. Who do we want to be and what do we want to experience? We can create happiness regardless, but that's not the end of the inquiry.

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Sometimes I think women think they need a good reason to go for what they want or to dare to want a bigger life. And so, they come to coaching and they learn that they can create their emotions with their thinking. And then it's like that somehow takes away their justification for wanting to change or do something different but you can change something in your life just because you want to. You don't need any justification or any approval from anyone, including me.

The fact that you could change your thoughts to make peace with your circumstances doesn't mean you're morally obligated to do so, or that even if you do, you can't then change them anyway. I think that when we talk about the big picture happiness, are we happy with our life choices and how we're living our lives? We're really talking about fulfillment, contentment, the sense and the belief that we have used our time well.

And again, you can always choose to think you've used your time well, no matter what you've done, especially in the past. There's no upside to beating yourself up now for how you spent your time before. But there is an upside in thinking bigger about how you want to spend your life going forward. Let's assume yes, you can feel content or satisfied no matter what you do by managing your mind, but what would feel like going big to you? What would feel like growth and evolution? What would feel empowering and mind blowing?

Those are not experiences women are socialized to want or believe we can have. We're socialized to play it safe, keep small and not put ourselves out there for fear of judgment, failure and shame. And this is how a focus on the small h happiness, that emotion of happiness, and especially when we define happy as just not feeling bad, focusing on that too much can actually keep us from creating that bigger picture big H Happiness in our lives.

Because to create that big picture happiness what we need is the ability to go for what we want, which can be a scary process and doesn't always feel

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good. And that's why we need, as well, the ability to be kind to ourselves, no matter what. And that I think is the linchpin of creating that big picture happiness because we think that confidence comes from believing we are amazing and can do anything and that we're already incredible. But I actually don't think that's true. I don't think that's what confidence comes from. I'm going to share where I think confidence really comes from right after this.

So, I don't think that confidence comes from thinking that we're already amazing at something. I don't think that we get up the confidence to play our first music recital from believing that we're amazing at music or make our first coaching offer from believing that we will absolutely succeed. What allows us to take risks is not that feeling confident we'll definitely succeed. It's feeling safe enough with ourselves to allow for the possibility of failure. Let me say that again.

What allows us to take risks is not a confidence that we will definitely succeed. It's feeling safe enough with ourselves to allow for the possibility of failure. The reason we don't go for what we want, the kind of relationship, the job, the business, the family, the vacation, the creative pursuit, the hobby, whatever it is, is because of our anticipation of what it will feel like if we don't get it. And we don't realize how much of that is created by our thoughts about ourselves. The reason rejection or failure stings is because of what we make it mean.

If you're an inventor and you are trying to create a new machine and you 100% believe it is possible to create this, then any time it doesn't work, that's just more information about what does not work so you can figure out what will work. Those failures don't pain you. Failure pains us when we tell ourselves a painful story about it, that we aren't good enough, that we can't do it, that everyone is laughing at us or judging us or pitying us, that there's something wrong with us, that we won't be able to be happy or be loved or be safe because we can't 'get it right'.

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So, if we want to feel confident enough to take risks and go after the life we want, we have to have more self-safety. We have to decide ahead of time how we are going to talk to ourselves if we fail. We have to decide ahead of time what we will make failure mean. Will we make it mean we're brave and creative and on the right path or that we are wrong and stupid and on the wrong one?

Whatever life we want, whatever will create that big picture happiness and fulfillment, it will probably require taking some risks. For some of us, that's because we want a life that isn't reflected in the social norms. So maybe we have to break with society's expectations and live a life that looks different than what we've been told to want. Maybe your whole family are doctors and you want to be a llama farmer or your whole family are llama farmers and you want to be a doctor.

Or for some of us, what we want may actually align with social norms, but we want it to feel authentic and true and real. So maybe you do want to continue the family llama or doctor tradition, and you want to have a spouse and two kids and a white picket fence. But you will still need to have hard conversations with that spouse or do some healing work on yourself to parent better, just to be fully inhabiting your life and not be operating on autopilot.

So, whether you want your life to look really different on the surface than you've been taught, or you just want it to feel more authentic and true to you, both of those are a piece of that big picture happiness. But both of them require the ability to take risks emotionally, the emotional capacity to take risks by telling the truth, by breaking with tradition, by putting yourself out there, by being truly vulnerable. And in order to do that, we have to create more safety with ourselves by changing the way that we talk to ourselves when we fail.

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What we say to ourselves when we fail is the difference between being able to take a risk or not, between feeling confident to try or not. And between being able to make those bold choices to create the life that we really want and that big picture happiness or not. Whatever life you want to have, you'll need confidence to take risks to create it. And that is only really possible when you have the safety with yourself to feel brave enough to try.

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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.