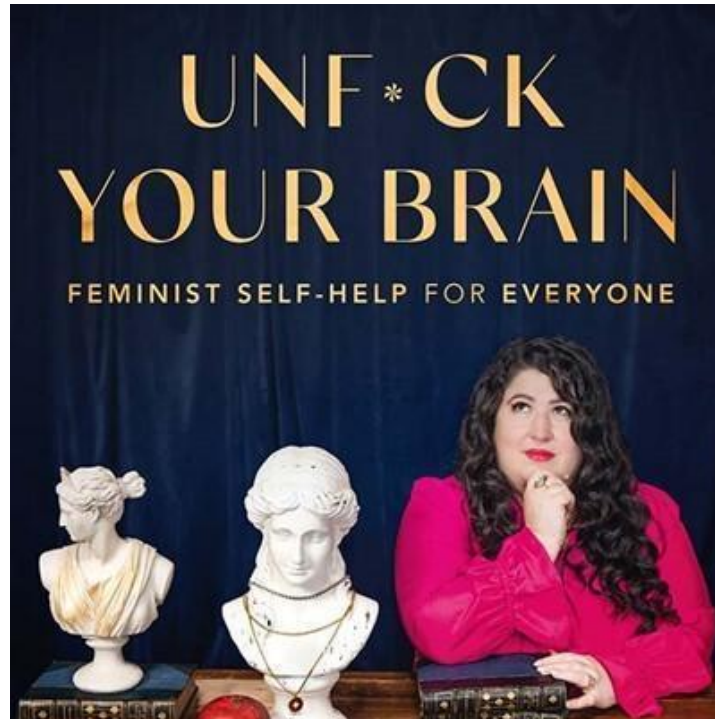


UFYB 113: Listener Q&A: Goals, New Year Resolutions, Dating, Love & Sex



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, it is almost the new year. So I have a lot of questions and requests of course, around the new year about resolutions and how to know what resolutions are good goals to set and how to pick them and how to know if they are perfectionist fantasies or not. And if you don't know what that is, go back and listen to the episode about it, but it's basically how to pick goals that are the right goals, for the right reasons, and then how to make sure you actually stick to them.

So I think it's such a set of brilliant questions and it's something that's really worth diving into because when we set our goals for the year, we're really setting the intentions that our brain is going to work on, but so many of us just set way too many, set the wrong ones, or the wrong kind, and then we don't carry them out.

We don't carry through with them, and then we get in this cycle where we sort of don't have any integrity with ourselves. We can't rely on ourselves, again, not because there's anything wrong with us, but just because we don't understand the tools that we need, and we don't know the right questions to ask, and the way to set ourselves up for success. But then it becomes this vicious cycle.

Alright, so today I'm going to be answering questions about relationships with other people in a variety of different contexts. So that covers a lot of life, but that's kind of what they all have in common. I'm going to start with some questions about dating and sex and romantic relationships.

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So someone asked, “How do you deal with unrequited love? Is there even such a thing?” This is such an interesting question. So I totally think there’s such a thing in the sense that unrequited love is just the term that we use for when you love someone who doesn’t love you back.

So yeah, it exists. The question of how you deal with it is so interesting because it assumes that it’s a problem to love someone who doesn’t love you back. And I don’t really accept that premise. I don’t think it is a problem to love someone who doesn’t feel love for you, or who doesn’t have the same thoughts that you do about what they feel for you.

It’s never the case that what someone feels for us is the problem. In any context, love or anything else. That’s never the problem. The problem is our own thoughts about what it means if the person tells us or acts in such a way that we start to think we know their thoughts about whether or not they love us. That’s what’s a problem. It’s like, what we make that mean.

And actually, I have an episode coming out in a couple of weeks that, it’s not exactly about unrequited love but it’s all about why we feel pain and suffering when we want or desire something that we can’t have, and how to change that.

So I think it’s so fascinating to think about whether unrequited love could feel amazing. Loving someone feels amazing. That’s always the case. Love always feels good. What feels bad is all of your thoughts about how they don’t love you and that’s a problem. That’s what feels bad. It’s not the love part. It’s your thoughts that it’s unrequited and that that’s a problem.

It’s one of those places that I think like, having been a weird child who read a lot and an English major kind of helps me because I think it’s so interesting to think about Petrarch, who wrote famous sonnets of

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unrequited love would have said that unrequited love, love of a stranger who you never even spoke to, was like the higher form of love.

People across different societies have had such different ideas of what is the love to which you should aspire. And so it's all just our own thoughts about what love should be like and what makes a love requited or not requited or positive or negative that creates all of the additional kind of drama and suffering around it.

But it's interesting to just think of the question as how do I deal with feeling love for someone? We don't have to deal with that at all. Feeling love feels amazing, right? It's only what we make that love mean and then how we react to our own idea of it.

Whether we decide that we're going to never think about anyone else and stay obsessed with them forever or we decide that it's a problem that we love them and then we have to try to get away from it, any kind of extreme reaction to it can produce results we don't like in our lives, but it's never because of the feeling of love.

It's always because of our thoughts about that love. I mean, we have thoughts that we love someone that produce the feeling of love, but then we have thoughts about that. It's those meta thoughts about the love that can cause a problem for us.

Another question I get a lot and that came in in this batch too was, "Is libido physical or mental? And how do I get mine back?" This is such a great question, and my answer to this is really that it's both. So I don't believe that it's 100% mental. I think that there are - we don't even really totally understand what makes people sexually attracted to each other.

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And some of it may be pheromones and then some studies suggest it has to do with complementary immune systems that would produce offspring, and then Freud would say it has to do with what your mother looked like. People have a lot of different theories. So I don't think it's entirely mental, but I do think it's much more mental than we think.

And it's so interesting that we assume it's just physical because what's the most classic story in the world? People have a lot of sex when they get together and they're very attracted to each other, and then they're together a long time, they get married or they move in together, and then they stop being attracted to each other and they stop having sex.

Well, the people didn't change that much. It's our thoughts about them that changed. So yes, there's some physical basis to attraction I think, but a lot of it is mental and you can do a lot of work on your own attraction to someone based on what you're thinking about them.

Now, libido itself is sort of a different question. That's just sex drive. And similarly, I think it's both. Obviously, there are some hormones that impact our libido, our sex drive, our desire for sex, and some people naturally have more or less of it, or none. Some people identify as asexual and some people who are asexual experience having no desire for sex. There's a whole range.

But I do think, again, more of it is mental than we think. Because if you think about it like, most of us are just living our lives, and whatever feelings we happen to have, or whatever results we happen to create in our lives, we just think our reality and happening to us. We're just not even aware of all the thoughts in the background.

And so the same is true for all the thoughts that may be impacting your libido and your desire for sex. There's so many thoughts that could be

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impacting it, like, thoughts about yourself and your body, thoughts about sexuality and what sexuality is, or what kind of sex you want or can have or can't have, or thoughts about your partner or thoughts about not having a partner.

So I would say both attraction and libido, yes, there's some physical element, but most of us, there's a lot of range in there based on our thoughts and we're not using that range. We're not working on our thoughts to get more play within that range.

And women in particular I think are socialized to experience desire and sexual desire as something they experience when they are the object of someone else's desire. It's like, reflective desire. And so I think for women, there's a lot of work and I work on this with my clients quite a bit, a lot of work to kind of figure out - it's more like play I think than work, but what does it mean to feel sexual just for myself?

What does it mean to be attracted to myself? What does it mean to have desire for myself? To have a sexual relationship with myself that is not about whether someone else desires me? How do I bring up a feeling of sensuality and sexuality in my own life for myself that has nothing to do with anyone else?

So much of that is mental and that work can really make such a profound difference on your experience of your libido, your sexual attraction, and your sex life, with other people or yourself. So it's a great question.

Here's another question I get quite a lot, which is, "How do I stay positive about dating when it hasn't produced the result I want yet?" So this question, you could sub in anything. How do I stay positive about my business when it hasn't produced the result I want yet? How do I stay positive about my child when they're not doing what I want?

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Here's the thing; when we think about it this way, it's like we're thinking that the activity or the goal owes us something. We're like, dating is not doing its part, it hasn't given me my result. Why should I think positively about it?

But when you think like that, you're never going to get the result you want. This presumes that the circumstance, whether you have a partner, causes your thoughts and feelings. Like the other way to ask this question is well, I don't have a partner, so how can I feel positive about being single?

But the whole point is that the circumstance that you're dating and don't have a partner is not what causes your feelings. Your thoughts are what cause your feelings. You will never get anything in life by believing that you need it to feel okay, and that something's gone wrong when you don't have it.

The journey has to feel like the destination or it just will. The journey always feel will like the destination. So you can't hate dating into a positive relationship. It's like you can't hate selling into a full book of sales. You can't hate business into a thriving coaching business. You can't hate your job into a fulfilling career.

You can't hate something or reject something while you're doing it and expect to get a good result out of it. You're either not going to get a result at all, or if you do get the result, you're not going to enjoy it because you've conditioned your brain to think all these negative thoughts about the process and your brain does not just shut those off because you hit a certain point.

People do this all the time. They're like, I hate dating, but then I'll love being in a relationship. I hate trying to get tenure but then I'm going to love when I have tenure. I want to hate my body now and then love it when I lose weight. None of that ever works. You're training your brain to look for

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everything that's wrong and to think a certain set of thoughts that cause negative emotion.

Your brain is going to keep thinking those thoughts, even if you manage to get the thing with those thoughts. So this is not a useful question to ask yourself. How can I stay positive when it hasn't produced the result I want? It's not going to produce the result you want until you are able to be positive about it.

So you have the causation totally backwards. Your most powerful question is how do I think positive thoughts about this or at least neutral, or at least just take ownership of my negative thoughts. How do I date with a managed mind and how do I enjoy dating until I get the result I want?

Dating doesn't owe you anything. Your goal doesn't owe you anything. Even the thoughts that you want to think, they don't owe you anything. We get very entitled about it and we're like, I've been thinking this thought and it hasn't given me the result yet, so I'm not going to think it anymore. Or this thought is not doing what it should do.

You have to commit to the thought. You have to commit to the process before you get the reward. Imagine picking up a cello and being like, well, I practiced for a month and I'm not Yo-Yo Ma, so this cello is not giving me the result I want, I'm just going to quit. That would be ridiculous, right? But a lot of us do that with our thoughts and our goals and our thought work.

We're like, well, I did some and I didn't get exactly what I wanted right away so I'm quitting. It's not working, it's not doing what it should do. No. You have to commit to it. You have to earn your result. You have to commit to the thought, you have to commit to the thought work, you have to commit to managing your mind, you have to commit to enjoying the process and the ride.

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You have to commit to it before you're going to get anything back in return. Same with your business, same with a relationship, same with anything else. Your goal does not owe you shit. You have to commit to it and commit to enjoying the process in order to get it.

I kind of feel like I should end on that because that really is true of anything, so I think I'm going to. I think that's it for today, you all. You're going to re-listen to that question and answer a few times because that truly will change your life.

If you commit to your thought work, to managing your mind, to practicing having the thing you want to have, to the journey to get to the goal, if you commit to that, if you go all in first, that's when you're going to get the reward. It's just like a relationship with someone else. Wanting them to be all in when you're not all in.

Their job isn't to be all in when you're not all in. Your job is to be all in and maybe you will get a reward for that, and maybe the reward will just be the journey and the learning. But for sure, the other person or the relationship or the goal or whatever the process is does not owe you anything. The thought doesn't owe you anything, the tools don't owe you anything.

You have to be willing to commit and put in the effort, and then eventually you can play the cello and then you get your reward. But that cello does not owe you anything.

Alright my dears, that's my tough love for today. See y'all in there.

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