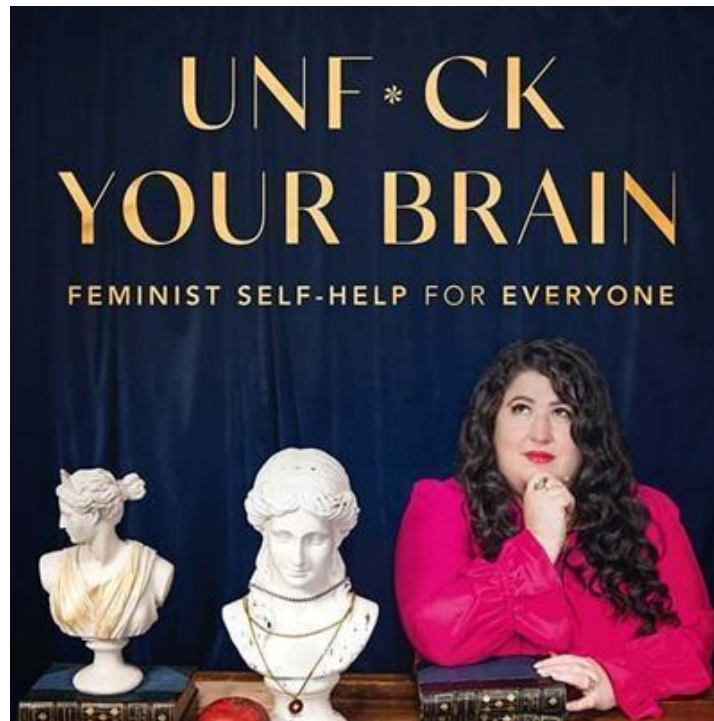


UFYB 175: QA: Business Building Thoughts & Getting Negative Feedback at Work



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. I am so excited for this episode. I mean, I'm always excited for these episodes, but we get so many questions from listeners about everything under the sun. Questions about their lives, questions about self-coaching. We get a lot of questions about what it's like to be in The Clutch and what you learn that's different from the podcast.

And so today, we are answering all of those questions in a way. We're doing the best of both worlds. So inside The Clutch, one of the things you get access to when you join is this huge library of at least 100, probably over 100 question and answer episodes that I've done.

So if you've listened to previous episodes of the podcast where I answer listener questions, I'm only able to do those kind of infrequently because I have so much other stuff I want to teach you and all these interesting people to talk to and there's just so much. There's so much more than I will be teaching for the rest of my life.

But inside The Clutch, we have this archive of 100 question and answer podcasts that I did just for members of The Clutch. Answering their questions and teaching and coaching about all the different things that come up when you're studying coaching and self-coaching.

Everything from here's my specific situation with my kid or partner or boss or parents or whatever, to the philosophical enquiries that I know a lot of you have about coaching, like am I really supposed to feel positive about everything, and what about when bad things happen and what about bad

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people and what about tragedy and all these kind of deep questions that are absolutely good things to be grappling with when you're thinking about a governing framework for your mind and for your life.

So what we've done is we have taken a few of those episodes and we are going to release them for you guys. This is never before heard outside of The Clutch. Episodes where we go through some of the questions that I have been asked inside The Clutch and give you a taste of what the private podcast library that you can only get inside The Clutch is all about. So I can't wait for you to listen and enjoy.

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Okay, so this first question - I actually got two almost identical questions but they were from different people. So I'm kind of answering them both at once. One was, "Hi Kara, how can we apply thought work when receiving professional feedback? If someone has a complaint about us or our work, of course we can know that we don't cause their feelings, but sometimes others may be offering valid feedback that's hard to hear. So how can we manage our minds to discern what we can use and what is not true or helpful without being defensive?"

Great question. The other question was - which was very similar, "How do you work through thoughts of failure or being attacked when a client points out a mistake or wants to change something?" So they're pretty related, right? I'm just going to answer them both together.

The whole reason that something is hard to hear is our thoughts about it. So it's the same way that if you feel attacked, it's your thought about it. Why is it a problem if a client wants to change something or spots a mistake? Only because of what you make it mean. Why is some feedback hard to hear? Only because of what you make it mean.

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It's always your thoughts. And there's a reason that I sort of teach in this particular sequence. There is sometimes something useful in feedback that other people give you and I think it is a good idea to try to be open to that and really consider it. For a lot of us though, we have to go through an intermediate step where we work on kind of believing that it's possible that the feedback has nothing to do with us.

That it's not automatically right if it's critical and that other people's thoughts are what cause their feedback. Not our personal failings. It's like we have to build up both our own self-esteem, our own kind of love and acceptance for ourselves, even if we've made a mistake or whatever, and we have to build up disconnecting our response from what other people say, so understanding that other people just have models also and their feedback is totally subjective and it doesn't mean anything about us.

We have to do that work first. When you've done that work, you'll know because feedback doesn't bother you. Positive or negative. It goes both ways. I get tons of feedback. I get feedback from strangers all the time who email me or leave comments on Facebook ads or posts I've made on Instagram or whatever.

And some of it's positive and some of it's negative and I honestly feel the same way about both. Neither one of those gets a rise out of me. The positive doesn't get a positive hit of validation out of me, and the negative doesn't get a negative rise out of me because I've so disconnected what I think about myself and my own work from other people's thoughts and I know that has nothing to do with me.

Now, occasionally someone does point out something that I actually do want to change, right? Sometimes someone does point out that I've left something out or haven't considered this point of view, or what about this

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idea, or I could have coached differently in that situation. If I get that, then I'm interested and I want to hear it and think about it.

But you guys have to be careful that you're not - this question is how can I not be upset about the - how can I see whether feedback is valid when it's hard to hear? That's the wrong question. The question is why is this hard to hear. What's my thought about this feedback? Why is it hard to hear?

It's not like what can I do when I feel attacked. It's why do I feel attacked, what am I making this mean. Somebody pointing out a mistake I made is not an attack unless I believe it is one and think that way. So the answer to how you can discern what you want to use and what's not true or helpful, you actually can't even tell that until you have made it, until you've completely disconnected it from what you think and feel about yourself.

Your self-acceptance and your self-regard and your love for others, until all of that is solid. Until other people are truly neutral and you love and accept yourself no matter what, then you're totally able to - it's just like apologizing. When we feel super defensive, we don't want to apologize. And it's like, we have to do the work first to feel okay not apologizing and understanding those thoughts belong to someone else and it's their responsibility.

And then when we get through that part, we find oh, it's actually quite easy to apologize. It doesn't cost me anything and it's fine. Because we're not feeling defensive, we're not making it mean that there's something wrong with us for being wrong or like it's wrong to apologize.

So it all comes back to what are you making it mean and why you're feeling defensive. Worry about that part first. The equation is not let me figure out how to discern what's helpful when I'm feeling defensive. The question is how do I make sure I don't feel defensive. What's that work that brings me

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to a place where I'm not defensive? Then it's going to become so much more naturally clear to me what's useful and what's not.

Okay, next question. So the question is, "You mentioned what you made as a coach your first to third year in business, and I'm wondering if you don't mind sharing what thoughts you used at each stage to get you there. Which main thought got you to make what you did your first year, second year, third year, and now thinking of the future?"

Okay, such an interesting question. So I have to think about this. My thought my first year was not super empowering, which is - well, I don't know if that's true. So here's what I'll say about my first year. I think when I started my business, my thought actually was, "This is the secret to life." I believe that now. That will always be my thought about my work. "This is the secret to life."

And so I initially started and I sold a couple of clients pretty quickly and then I sort of had about a year to nine months where I was getting - I had a couple of clients at all times but there would be months where I would only get one or two new clients as opposed to - I probably was trying to get seven a month or something.

So I think that that thought, "This is the secret to life," it did enable me to kind of sell and build my business a little bit. But in that situation, I don't think that the thought, "This is the secret to life," that's not a \$50,000 thought, which was my first-year revenue. That's an unlimited amount of money thought.

But I also had a lot of other thoughts that were getting in the way. So I think the reason that I made \$50,000 my first year instead of, I don't know, \$100,000 or whatever else was not that specific thought but it was just a lot

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of other thoughts about not being able to sell or not knowing how to market, not being good at sales.

I had a lot of money mindset I had to clean up my first year, which went a lot deeper than the business and just had to do with thinking that money was something that other people gave me. I'd always had jobs, but I had always been a salaried employee and my thought that I had grown up with in general was sort of like if you're going to have any money beyond your non-profit salary, other people made that and gave that to you.

I didn't identify with being an entrepreneur. I didn't identify with being a businesswoman. My teacher still teases me that I was like, I'm not a businesswoman, I don't wear pantsuits and carry a briefcase. So I think my first year the thought that did help me make that 50K was, "This is the secret to life," and what kept me from making 100K my first year were these thoughts about money and not being good at selling and not being a businesswoman basically.

So the other thing that's interesting of course is you have to start working on a thought before it actually takes effect. You have to learn how to believe it. So I actually remember really clearly, I think that I came up with in October, so six months into my first year I think is when I came up with the thought that actually helped me make 200K my second year in business.

But it's like I was working on that thought for six months before it really kicked in. I think the thought that - maybe four months, but it was definitely in the fall because I remember being at one of my master coach training meetings when I had this thought. So that thought, the thought that really fueled my second year I think was, "I'm doing pretty well not trying that hard. Imagine what would happen if I tried."

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I have always been a hard worker. It's not like I wasn't doing things. But my first year, because I still had all these thoughts about failing or how I look - not how I looked physically although I probably had those too, but like how I would appear and thoughts about people thinking I'm a life coach and thoughts about selling or marketing.

So I was not really - I wouldn't say I wasn't working but I wasn't putting myself out there hard. If that makes sense. So I was still worried about trying and failing basically. I was not failing big. I wasn't taking any big risks; I wasn't really going after it. I was still a little bit caught in that trap of failing ahead of time, which had really been my whole life, which is so interesting.

I had this very successful professional career but emotionally and mentally I was always just failing ahead of time in my own brain. So the thought that really fueled my second year was like, "I've done pretty well not trying. Imagine what would happen if I actually tried." And that thought produced \$200,000, which was four times more than not trying.

So I think that was my main thought that really fueled that second year. And the other big thing I will say is that thought kind of kicked in and then a few months after that, so about more than a year - about a year after I'd started my business, I had just started my podcast, I was starting to get a few more clients.

A month in I hired a bookkeeper CFO type person and I remember our first call, in my brain, my business "wasn't working yet" because I still had credit card debt from startup expenses, and I hadn't paid that off yet and it wasn't fully supporting me yet. So of course my thought was that my business isn't where it should be or I'm not making enough money yet and that was obviously - although I was doing better than my first year, it was still holding me back.

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And I remember that he looked at it and he was like, “Oh, this is a totally working business, you have revenue coming in every month, it’s predictable, you’re getting new clients, you’re not overspending on expenses, of course you have startup debt, that’s no big deal, all businesses do, we’re just going to pay it down, you’re not even going to think about it.”

And it was like, an amount of money that to me is what was my - it was \$15,000 or something on my business credit card or \$20,000. I don’t know, it was just an amount now that I wouldn’t even notice probably but it was so big to me then.

So that thought also was really powerful and I talk a lot when I work with new coaches about what I think are kind of unrealistic expectations coaches have where they think that because they don’t have a lot of overheads they’re like, but I can work from home, whatever, they’re not going to have to invest in their business, they’re not going to have to probably incur some debt to get started, which is not how anyone thinks about any other business.

Nobody’s like, I’m going to open a restaurant and why would I need a loan or to invest in a space or food, right? Most businesses operate at a loss the first two years or three years of their existence. Some businesses operate at a loss for a lot longer.

And so I think that kind of shift mentally from the consumer model of debt, which is oh, it’s bad and it’s something moral and you shouldn’t have it and it means you were not thrifty or whatever, to a business model of debt, which is like, of course you have debt. All businesses have debt. That’s why credit was invented. And now I actually don’t operate with debt, even though a lot of businesses operate with credit forever to avoid having to

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pay too many taxes. So I would say those two thoughts were for the second year.

And then the third year - what was my thought for the third year? It's a good question. I think my thought for the third year was - it's interesting. I'm not totally sure. I think that those thoughts - the second-year thoughts kind of bled into the third year. In my third year, I actually hadn't set a goal to make a million when I did. My goal had been to make half a million and then I made a million.

What is the thought that was creating half a million? I think my thought was like - a part of the reason this is hard to answer is this is like, I was coaching myself all the time on my business. I had a million thoughts. But I think the thought in my third year was kind of like, this is fun. I really - I had switched to doing groups, I had expanded beyond lawyers, I really loved coaching and teaching in groups.

I could see the women were taking the work so much deeper, I had started charging more and it was working. I think I just was sort of like, holy shit, you can do whatever you want, this is fun. I think those were my thoughts. And now my thought - I think that was the thought that got me to 500K maybe and then - thoughts don't always work like in annual anniversaries.

The thought I think I started thinking around the time that I started getting towards a million and the thought that I think now, and my goal this year is probably one and a half million is - my thought is like, "I'm changing the world." In the beginning I needed a lot of thoughts about myself and my ability to do it and my business and my ability to have a business.

And now my thought is just like, I'm on a mission and I'm changing the world. And the business is - the money is just a byproduct of putting myself out there, getting my message out there, reaching more women, and

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changing their lives. So I loved that question. So interesting. I need to start writing down my main annual business thoughts so I have a record.

So the question is, “I feel like I have no life goal and I haven’t been able to get past it. I feel like my life would be better, more fulfilling, and more productive with one. Help.”

Okay, so if you think - with anything you think you want, a life goal is no different than if I had a husband, if I had this kind of job, if I had this different body, if I lived in this different place. If I had some different circumstance, then my life would be better, more fulfilling, and more productive.

So whenever you tell yourself I want this thing and I don’t have it, the question is always why do you want it? What do you imagine you would get to think and feel if you had it? So why would your life be better? Answer that question. Why would your life be more fulfilling? Answer that question. Why would you be more productive? Answer that question.

The answer to those questions are all the thoughts that you want to think and you think you have to have a “life goal” to make you think them. Now, what’s so fascinating about this is who has a life goal? I don’t really teach that anyone needs a life goal. I wouldn’t say I have a life goal. I have a business goal and then I have goals in my personal goal. I have a lot of different goals. I don’t have a life goal.

So I think this is just a way that you’ve just sort of come up with this as something to pin the dissatisfaction of the human experience on. And because it’s so unspecified and you think you don’t know how to get it, then you can just blame all of your negative feelings on it. And then you can keep wondering about it for years.

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But what if there was no life goal? What if it was just like, what's your goal for January or February? What's your goal for the next week? Then you'd have to actually do something, right? You'd have to take some action. So I think that for you in particular, the person who asked this question, I would go listen to the perfectionist fantasies episode because for sure your idea of a life goal here is a total perfectionist fantasy.

That there's some big thing that would be different and then your whole life would be perfect and you would feel better and more fulfilled and you'd be productive, every positive outcome you could think to keep on top of it. And thinking that way actually is what keeps you from setting any goals.

So you don't need a life goal. You need to figure out why you think you need one. What those thoughts are that you want to think, what those emotions are you want to feel, and how you create those for yourself. And then how to set some small goals. Not a life goal.

Maybe someday you'll work your way up to a life goal but right now, you're never going to come up with one because you want it to be magic and change all your thoughts and feelings and that your brain can't ever come up with that, so then you never think you've found it. You have to really see how that works.

It's the same with a partner. If you think that a partner is supposed to change your whole life, your brain will constantly reject every partner you have as not being the right one because none of them have magically changed your life. Same thing here.

If having a goal is supposed to make your life better, more fulfilling, and more productive, which it can't because those are a mix of thoughts and feelings caused by your brain, then no goal you ever come up with will

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seem good enough or like the right ones, then you'll never pick one and it's just a self-fulfilling cycle.

The second question that's a little bit similar is, "What is the quickest, most effective way that I can start showing up with full confidence in my business and stop telling myself I don't know enough?" Okay, so the answer to that is stop telling yourself I don't know enough.

See how it's embedded in the actual question? The key to stopping thinking something or to stopping telling yourself something is not - you can't just say brain, stop telling me I don't know enough. You have to pick a thought on purpose to practice to sub in. We have to redirect our brains. We cannot just tell our brains stop thinking this, like instant lobotomy. That's not how it works.

You have to redirect your brain on purpose. So you have to come up with a thought that you're going to practice thinking instead of I don't know enough. Because there's no such thing as enough. Your brain will never tell you that you know enough. So what if you don't need to know enough? What if you just need to know what one little next action you can take?

What if you don't need to know anything and the only way you'll learn is by trying? There's a lot of different ways to think about it. But trying to get to the point where you know enough will never work. And the first part of this question is a perfect indication that you also have a perfectionist fantasy about showing up with full confidence and you want to get there quickly and effectively.

It's like saying what is the quickest and most effective way that I can immediately run a full marathon. No. That's not how it works. Full confidence, first of all, is a fantasy. You're going to have a human brain the whole time. I still get doubts about shit in my business or in my personal life

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or wherever. I still have a human brain. It still tells me that things aren't going to work or my goals are too big or it's going to be too hard or I don't know how to do it. That's just having a human brain.

So making the goal full confidence, it's just like thinking a life goal should make you feel a certain way. It's just an impossible perfectionist fantasy that you'll never reach, and then you tell yourself that you can't start showing up or you can't succeed.

Whereas my thought about my business, I will tell you this. It's so fascinating. All the coaches who think they need to feel more confident to do things and they have to wait until they feel good about it to do it don't make any money. And I have made millions with the thought, "It's amazing how much you can do with a half-managed mind."

You see the difference between those two thoughts? My thought is like, there's a lot still crazy up there but that's okay. I have a moderate grip on part of it and we're just going to go with that. The difference between I want to show up in my business with full confidence and I'm willing to show up with a half-managed mind and I bet I can still do a lot of good and make a lot of money that way, that's the difference between having no business and having a seven-figure business or even a six-figure versus seven-figure.

Truly, that is the difference. So that's a terrible goal to try to show up with full confidence as if you're not going to have a human brain because you'll never get there, and then you'll just keep telling yourself you're not there yet so you can't do anything.

I think the goal should be how can I do one thing today to move my business forward. Even if I feel like shit the whole time. That is a useful question. But I wanted to answer this question because it's such a beautiful

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indication of perfectionist fantasy mindset, when you're asking what's the quickest, most effective way I can do this thing perfectly.

How can I have full confidence quickly and effectively? If full confidence were even a thing a person could ever have, you would have to work your way there by working on your thoughts one by one. Just like running a full marathon is a thing some people can do and they still have to run it mile by mile and train that whole time.

So there's no magic pill or overnight trick to showing up with full confidence and I don't even think full confidence is a good goal. So come up with a thought you want to practice instead of I don't know enough and change your thought about what the goal is here.

The goal is not show up in full confidence quickly and effectively. The goal is feel full of self-doubt and fear like any human but be willing to feel them and also show up today in my business. It's a very different goal. And that one you can meet today, which is why perfectionist brain hates it so much because you can't just put it off to the future because you're qualified to do it now.

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