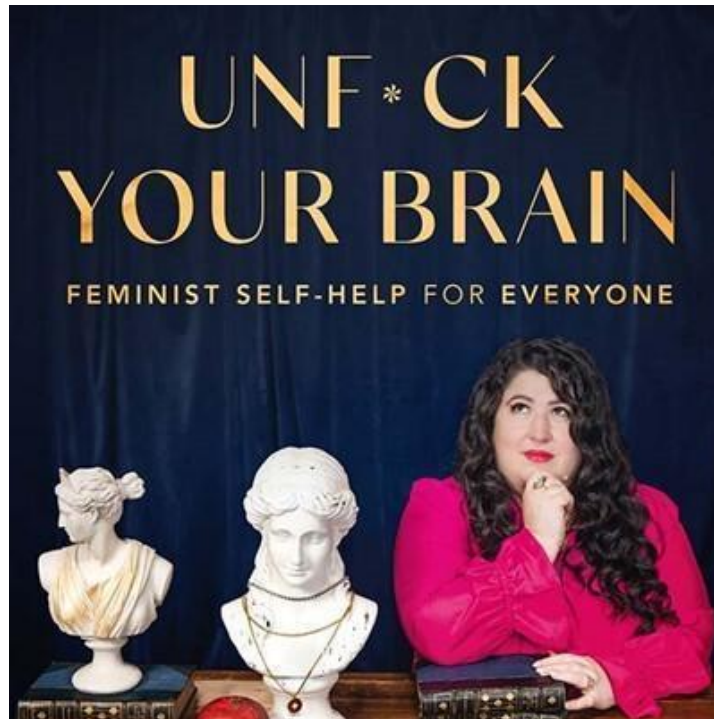


UFYB 237: Belonging v. Making Change



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 don't know about you, but I'm feeling just the teensiest burnt out or have been, at least. There's so many amazing things happening in my life, in my business. And yet the world is really a lot right now. And I have definitely had a few days over the course of the past few months when I felt like I was kind of one step-toe away from breaking down and weeping and losing my mind.

And that's how I feel as somebody who manages their mind professionally. So I know that some of you are feeling that way and so much worse. It has just been a real couple of years. And then a real couple of months we've had the pandemic. We've had the war on Ukraine. Gas prices are up. Inflation might be going up.

Now we have the leaked Supreme Court draft, potentially overturning *Roe v Wade*. There's just a lot of shit going on in the world and it can be exhausting to try to handle all that. And our fears about the future and our own fucking lives, right? And making sure that the kids get to school on time and everybody has their lunches.

And we ate a vegetable today and we got some sleep and we remembered to say something nice to our partner. And we went and did our jobs. And maybe we took care of our parents and everything else that we're dealing with.

Hello my chickens. How are we doing today? I am coming off of several weeks of events, and trips, and masterminds, and my brain's a little bit tired. But it's always so good to be around other people who are thinking about their life intentionally and who believe in coaching and the power of

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managing your mind. It's such an important thing to kind of surround yourself with people who want to be evolving and changing their lives. That's not to say that all your family and all your friends need to also get into self-coaching and join The Clutch.

I mean sure they should but they don't have to. But it is important to seek out that community, to be around people who you have that in common with. And that really leads me actually to the topic of today because I want to talk about kind of different kinds of belonging and how we can create and facilitate change and when that's intention with our desires to belong. So, at my last mastermind meeting I was looking around the room and reflecting as I often do on how different the backgrounds are of everybody in that room. And this is my small mastermind group.

I am in a peer mastermind where everyone is a life coach and doing seven figures or more in their business. We know each other from having gone through coach certification or master coach certification together, different ways. So, we come from very different places. There's me, obviously I went to Harvard Law School. I did reproductive rights litigation and academia. And then a couple of people who have maybe similar backgrounds to me, one person was a doctor before she became a coach. One person was a nurse before she became a coach.

One of them worked in the social justice and non-profit world also. But then also one of us was an occupational therapist. And one of us sold mops in Walmart. And one person was the first in her family to go to college. And one person didn't go to college at all. And one person swears all the time which is me, not only one, others of them swear too. And then one of us is a member of the Church of Latter Day Saints and doesn't swear at all. We have such different backgrounds and experiences.

And one of the things that I have thought about a lot as I made this transition from working in a sort of very traditional in a weird sense, I don't mean kind of conservative. I mean East Coast elite educational social

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justice oriented world and what the transition like was going from that to being a life coach. And what kind of diversity are prized in different environments. And so, in my kind of elite educational social justice world there was more kind of diversity of backgrounds and marginalized populations in many ways than the life coaching industry in terms of people's racial and ethnic identity and community.

But actually, not that much or not as much diversity of socioeconomic, and class, and educational backgrounds, makes sense. And then the life coaching industry has not historically had enough diversity of marginalized populations and people's racial and ethnic identities. But has more variety in kind of life experience and background along socioeconomic educational kind of axis. And obviously I think all these forms of diversity are super important. And ideally any sphere that you are in or any life that you create is going to have true diversity across different identity and belief lines.

So, it's not like one of these is better than the other, they're just different. It's just interesting to think about what kinds of differences I saw in these two different communities. And one of the reasons I'm bringing this up is that while I was at that trip I was having a conversation with my friend, Rachel. And Rachel used to do communications work and training at a very big important foundation, philanthropic foundation. By the way this was so cute, one of my students messaged me the other day and they referred to their coaching bestie as their Rachel which I just thought was adorable.

It's like our platonic love affair now has its own whole kind of relationship that can just go by it's own name. Anyway, I was talking to the original Rachel, my Rachel about how weird it is. We often just reflect on our old lives and our new lives and how strange that transition has been. And I was saying that in our old lives basically everyone around us was a feminist. I went to Yale. Rachel went to Wellesley, we both worked at progressive non-profit organizations, I lived in Manhattan, she lived in Brooklyn.

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Most of us people around us shared our political beliefs, they knew what feminism was. They identified as feminists whether they were people of every gender identity and if they didn't identify as a feminist it was usually because they had a more radical political analysis. And thought that the feminist movement was too mainstream, too white, too co-opted, whatever. So, the people who weren't feminists were like, "Yes, because I'm more leftist and more radical than feminist." Not, I'm to the right of it. So that was kind of our world and then we became life coaches.

And I was in the reproductive rights movement especially, particularly so there. And then we became life coaches and most of the people we encountered did not identify as feminists. And my experience was some people knew what a feminist was but they had negative associations with feminism. You know the stereotypes about feminists being angry, or hating men, or whatever these stereotypes are. And I could do a whole other podcast on that. And then some people saw feminism as political and they didn't see themselves as political so they didn't see themselves as feminists.

Some people just had literally basically never heard of feminism. They probably had heard the word one or twice or read it in an article but they just never even really given it any thought, not even enough thought to have a negative opinion of it. Or some people had heard of it but they were sort of like, that's not for me. That's not for people like me, for whatever reason, whether because they're from a community of color, that had been historically marginalized by the feminist community.

Or it just seemed that's for white people, that's for rich people, that's for women with graduate degrees, that's for women who hate men, that's for lesbians, whatever, all of these stereotypes about feminism. So, the point being, very different world we were going into. And now six years later having been a coach in this industry and sort of risen to the top of the industry and been in this field, in this space, it's really clear that I think being in the spaces we are in has changed the conversation.

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I see so many more coaches in the spaces that I have been active, and prominent, and loud in, talking about the patriarchy, talking about feminism. Or even not using those words specifically but talking about the socialization that women get, focusing on how to help women feel empowered, how to help women throw off social expectations.

I think it pops up everywhere all around me now in the life coaching industry, both with coaches who strongly identify as feminists and coaches who never use that word but are teaching their students to think about what they have been taught because they have been perceived as and socialized as women. Now, obviously I'm not taking credit for all of that. I'm not saying that I, or Rachel, or any specific person did all of that. But I also know it's true that just by being myself and being in these spaces, I have had some influence on some of these coaches.

I have gotten DMs telling me that. I have taken people through my certification. My colleague, Brenna O'Malley talked on the podcast about kind of being introduced to feminist concepts through getting to know me. And it was such a powerful realization for me when I was talking about this with Rachel and we were sort of like, "I really think that us being who we are and being willing to go into this whole new space with all these new people who didn't already agree with us, who work different from us. And bringing this message here has really impacted so many people."

So, this really crystallized to me the ways in which the desire to make change and the desire to belong can be in tension with each other. So, from the thought work perspective, I have to say of course that belonging is not a circumstance. It's a thought we like to have. I belong. I fit in. I'm just like these people. We have a lot in common. And when we think that we create a feeling. And we might call that feeling different things. Some people might call it connection. Some people might call it safety. Some people might call it love.

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But bottom line, disclaimer, belonging is not a circumstance, it's a thought, creates a feeling we want to have. And I have done episodes before about loneliness and the emotion of belonging and connection and how to create those. But you may not be able to do that perfectly right away. And I want to talk about the benefit of being willing to strike out on your own anyway because if you think about it, the way to a 100% belonging is to be the same as everyone else, to stay with people just like you and to never venture outside of your group.

But if you stay only where everyone already thinks like you then you can't actually make much change because the whole price of making change is losing that full belonging and that full agreement. And in order to change hearts and minds you have to go find hearts and minds that don't always agree with you. I really want you to think about that because especially those of us who are in the change making business I think we want to change hearts and minds but we also want to never feel rejected while we're doing that.

We want to just feel safe, and belonging, and accepted even while we're somehow changing people's beliefs. And that doesn't happen. That doesn't go together. And some of us are doing this as a career but even if you're not a politician or a social justice lawyer, or a life coach, or whatever, there are places in your life that you want to change people's minds, where you want to persuade people to see your side of something or to support a cause you care about.

And yet you don't want to feel rejected, or different, or disconnected. And you don't want other people to disagree or disapprove of you. And so today I just want to invite you to notice that I'm not sure that really works as a set of priorities because if you really want to create change you have to be willing to go outside of your comfort zone. And I want to be clear that I'm not saying anyone should do this. Some of us have no interest in doing this and that is totally fine. I do not think everyone needs to be out constantly trying to change the world.

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And depending on your identity and background there are different risks and benefits and costs to standing out, to trying to go into a community that hasn't met as many people like you or doesn't know as many people like you. That's not always physically as safe for some people than others. So, none of this is you should do anything. But if you are wanting to change people's minds and to change the world I think you have to think about how willing you are to be among people who are not entirely like you. And to be among people where you don't agree with all their opinions.

And to be among people who don't already share your beliefs, and values, and world view because there can be a weird insularity to some corners of any kind of world. But I have come from the social justice world myself so that's where I'm the most familiar, someone who worked in social justice organizations for a decade or more before I became a coach. I have done direct service work. I have done legal work. I've been on boards of national non-profits. And those communities are full of amazing people doing amazing work and I felt like I belonged to them when I was in them.

And I, for me personally I am absolutely sure that I would not have had the impact that I have had now if I'd stayed in that world where I was just one of many people who had the same opinions and beliefs. And again, I think the work that any community is doing to try to make the world better is super important. So, this isn't saying that everyone who does social justice work should change and take my approach. We need people who do stay in communities, and build community networks, and build community power, and build community action.

So again, none of this is to say what everyone should do. But if you are someone who like me, feels called to having a different conversation on a different stage with a different group of people I want you to think about the costs of trying to maintain belonging and shared identity above what you may be called to do or create. If I had stayed attached to the identity of a social justice advocate and stayed in that world I'm sure I would have done satisfying and important work but I think I would have just been one of

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many. I don't think I would have had the impact I'm having now. That's just for me and my journey.

So, this only applies to you if you feel similarly called to step outside of whatever your safe identity and community is for you. And that could be the opposite of mine. This is so personal. But taking that step for me, being willing to leave the kind of perceived safety of being in community with people where I knew what I was supposed to believe and we all shared the same opinions, or at least we all pretended to. This is where I have been able to meet and learn from and influence women so completely different from me.

And I have zero doubt that I will have indirectly and direct, I have touched directly so many women's lives through my work. And my work also speaks to people who maybe don't agree with everything I say. But there is people who won't even hear this work from me but they're able to hear the influence and impact I've had by sharing my ideas and my beliefs with other coaches and people in my coaching world who can then speak to their communities in a way that they understand it.

And I have zero doubt that I will have indirectly touched and changed so many more lives as a result. Because for myself personally I have made so much more of a difference in the world that I don't think somebody else would have made in the same way. By leaving the identity in that community I was in and venturing into this hilariously weird and mind blowing world of life coaching on the internet.

And that gave me the opportunity to create a different sense of belonging, to learn how to connect and belong among my new peers in my new world to be able to feel and create belonging in my old world, in my new world, wherever I go. But in order to do that I had to leave that group. I had to leave the belonging that comes from just thinking, well, I match everybody here so I belong. And go into a place where that wasn't true which required

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me to create to my own sense of belonging. To work on belonging with myself so that I felt able to connect to different kinds of people.

And therefore, be able to create that feeling of connection and belonging wherever I went. And that has allowed me to influence, and impact, and change so many people beyond who I could originally have spoken to. So that's what I'm leaving you with for today my chickens. Whatever it is that you want to change in the world, just understand that in order to create change, to change hearts and minds, to reach out into different people and change them, you're going to have to be willing to step out of the crowd.

You will get to create belonging wherever you're going but you have to be willing to take that first step to go there. Have a beautiful week. I will talk to you next week.

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