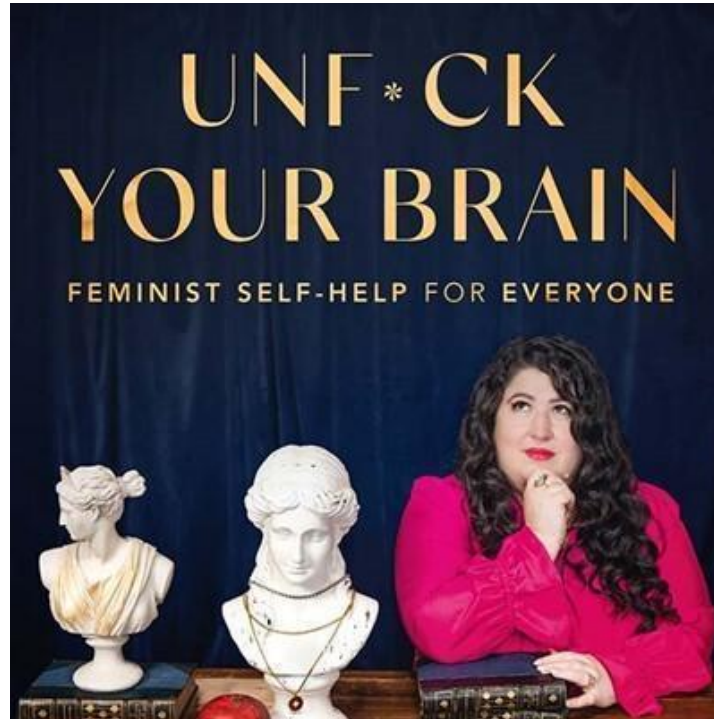


UFYB 260: How to Claim Your Authority



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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UFYB 260: How to Claim Your Authority

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, hello my chickens. I am recording this on a Friday morning and this afternoon I'm going to be heading to Philadelphia where I'm teaching our last Clutch College for a while. I love getting to spend a few days in a small group of students where I can see everyone's face. I can coach everyone's brain. I can really dig into creating that transformation. And, well, really, I should say, helping and facilitating my students create their own transformation because that's really what I want to talk about today.

I want to talk about something that I think is underappreciated as the key to transformation. And it's something that coaches are often not trained to help facilitate for their clients. And that's why it's something that we focus on a ton in the Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching. But it's not just for coaches, it's actually super important for clients, students, podcast listeners, anybody trying to do thought work to understand. So here is the crux of the issue.

When you listen to my podcast, or you hire a coach, or you join The Clutch, or however you're going to participate in coaching or thought work. You're seeking out of that person because they're an expert. So, you listen to the podcast because you think this woman has some stuff that I want to learn. Join The Clutch because you think okay, I want to access the expertise that has been distilled from years of work and put into this straightforward process for me to do. I want to benefit from that level of expertise and cut out all the trying to figure it out part.

So that's totally true. I have some expertise in what I teach, that's why you listen to the podcast. That's why you join The Clutch. It's why you hire

UFYB 260: How to Claim Your Authority

another coach, they have expertise in what they teach. There is expertise that other people have that can be beneficial to you. That's a 100% true. I don't try to treat my own medical conditions generally. Sometimes I might want to participate in that but I certainly want to learn from my doctor, my naturopath, my whoever.

But what happens often, what I see happening is that when someone listens to the podcast, joins The Clutch, hires a coach, or signs up for one-to-one coaching in The Clutch, whatever. They don't just see the coach as the expert, they seem as the authority. And this is actually a way of talking about the distinction that my friend and ACFC graduate, Brenda Lomeli shared on an event we did recently. And I thought it was so brilliant. I have been talking a lot for a long time about claiming your authority where Brenda contributed this idea of the distinction between expert and authority which I think is so helpful.

So, yes, whoever you are following, or hiring, or studying has expertise. But when happens is we conflate expertise with authority. And that's when we get in trouble. When you see someone else as the authority for you, you are disconnecting yourself from your own authority. And if you think about it, women and other marginalized people are socialized to do exactly that. It's not a byproduct, it's not an accident, it is literally the center of a lot of the socialization we get is to disconnect ourselves from our own authority.

We are taught over and over, women and other marginalized people in explicit and implicit ways that we are not authority figures and that we are not authorities at all. Just think about the most basic human functions. Women are socialized to believe and yes, everybody hears the socialization, but especially women that we don't know what we should eat, we need an expert to tell us. We don't know when we should eat, we need an expert to tell us. We don't know what we should look like, we need an expert to tell us.

UFYB 260: How to Claim Your Authority

We don't know what we should care about, we need an expert to tell us. We don't know how we should be, what kind of a person should we be, we need an expert to tell us. We don't know how please men enough, we need an expert to tell us. Women are constantly being told explicitly that they don't fucking know anything about their own lives and that they need other people to be that authority for them. And when you look at what we see around us in terms of the authorities we see around us and our culture, who are the presidents and the CEOs in TV shows? They're usually older when men.

Who's running most of our institutions? Who runs our politics, our universities, our banks, our legal system? Older white men. I could go on, and on, and on. And yes of course this is a changing bit by bit. But these positions of authority in our culture are still predominantly white men, older white men. And if you're listening to this and you're in your 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, when you were a child and a young adult, in your formative years this was even more the case.

If you're in your 20s now listening to this then maybe things were already, had started changing when you were growing up and you got a more diverse view, although still disproportionately older white men. If you're listening to this and you're in your 60s or 70s, it was really rare when you were growing up to see somebody other than an older white man in a position of authority. Women are taught to defer to men as the authority of anything that is considered hard, or complicated, or of public import, finance, politics, law. Anything in the public sphere women are socialized to defer to men.

Just think about the things that traditionally men handled in the household, and women handled in the household. And women are coded as the authority for things like childcare or cooking, domestic tasks but only when they're domestic. If you go to an haute cuisine fine dining kitchen the head chef is still disproportionately likely to be a man, probably a white man, probably a middle aged or older white man.

[UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](#)

UFYB 260: How to Claim Your Authority

So even in areas where women are given some authority or considered to be some kind of authority in at least the execution of it, they're still often not considered the authority in the theory of it. So, okay, women are supposedly nurturing and designed for childcare, and childrearing, and so naturally good at it. But do we teach mothers to trust their own intuition? No, we teach them that they need to read a ton of books, often written by, in the past especially by older white dudes about how to raise their children.

So even in an area where women supposedly have that as their domain, they're not taught to even trust their authority there. They're just taught to be able to execute. You've got to read Dr. Spock and then you can execute it. So that is such intense socialization that women get to disconnect from their own knowing, their own authority. And people of color are taught to defer to white people, that white people are the authority either because they're experts or because it's dangerous to disagree with them, or stand up to them, or both.

So, remember that we're talking about socialization, what society has taught you, it doesn't mean that you rationally and consciously agree with it. In fact, you may consciously think that you totally reject it, that you don't agree at all that men are authority. But it's impossible to escape the socialization. And if you haven't worked on it consciously then it is absolutely impacting your mindset. And honestly, even if you have worked on it, it's still probably impacting you, it's still a working progress. I see it in myself still and I do this for a fucking living.

I was teaching this small live business training for coaches a few weeks ago. And I asked everyone in the room to imagine a CEO in their mind. I didn't give them any more instructions, just picture association, when you hear CEO, what do you see? Only one other person in the room pictured herself, these are all people who have coaching businesses. Only one person in the room pictured herself, everyone else including me pictured a middle aged white man.

UFYB 260: How to Claim Your Authority

And I don't think it's a coincidence that it was my friend, Karen Crabtree who was there whose business is bigger than and probably brought in more revenue than all the rest of us combined, including myself last year or this year. She was the who said, "When I hear CEO I think of myself." But she talked about how that's because she consciously has practiced seeing herself and thinking of herself as a CEO for so long. And that's something I still work on and I've obviously been somewhat successful at it.

And still my brain when I think of the word CEO, what I see is a generic middle aged white dude who I think must know some shit about business that I don't know. And I'm still working on it. So how does this socialization and thought pattern play out in our lives. It's really important to see this. First it creates imposter syndrome in our professional lives. We don't see ourselves as authorities so we always think that we don't deserve our jobs or positions, and that we don't know what we're doing, and everyone else is going to find out what we're doing wrong, that we don't know what we're doing.

And in our personal lives it makes us want to outsource the authority for our decisions to someone else, sometimes anyone else, someone we know, a stranger. We'll read an advice column online, we'll post it on Reddit and ask for other people's opinions, not me personally because I'm terrified of Reddit, but other people do this. We want our friends to tell us whether we should break up with someone. We want our parents to validate and approve of our career choices so we can believe we made a good one.

We want our coach to tell us what to do, tell us if we chose a good thought, tell us what to think. We want our mentor to tell us whether our strategy for getting promoted is the right one, or how to build our business. We pepper our speech with undermining phrases like, I don't know if this makes sense, or this might be dumb. But we agonize over decisions as small as what to get for lunch because we've been told systematically for years that we don't even know what is the right thing to eat.

UFYB 260: How to Claim Your Authority

And we need someone else to tell us what we're allowed to eat, or what to wear because we don't know what looks good and we need someone else to tell us what we should wear. And we agonize over big decisions, like whether to leave a relationship, or whether to have children, or whether to quit a job. We ruminate constantly and we ask everyone we know their opinion because we don't trust ourselves to make the decision.

Now, listen, obviously doing some research and preparation is a good idea. You should find out if a mushroom is poisonous before you eat it for lunch. You should do some research on the housing market before you apply for a mortgage. But there's a big difference between doing time and scope limited research to inform your own wise decision making, which is not what we're doing most of the time. What we're doing most of the time is we are disconnected from our own authority and so we want to substitute someone else's opinion for our own.

We don't want to even have to form our own opinion, we just want to go with someone else's. And the reason we do that is because we don't trust ourselves. We don't trust our wisdom, we don't trust our own discernment, we don't trust ourselves to make our own decisions. And above all we don't trust ourselves to not berate ourselves later for any decision that we make now. That is why self-trust, and self-acceptance, and claiming your authority all go hand in hand together.

We're constantly outsourcing our authority because we've been taught that we can't trust ourselves. So, what we fear is not just that something may 'go wrong', but what we will say to ourselves if it does. We are afraid that if we make a mistake it will confirm what we fear all along which is that we are not trustworthy, that we can't trust ourselves. And the way the brain and the model work, the coaching model and the way the brain works because we fear that we are not trustworthy, we start out by not trusting ourselves from the get go.

UFYB 260: How to Claim Your Authority

So, then we just continue not trusting ourselves. We continue trying to crowd source our decisions. We continue not being able to take authority in our own lives. So, this thought pattern is fucking up every aspect of your life. It's disrupting your relationship with your body. It's getting in the way of your professional success. It's wasting so much time in agonizing over decisions, and deliberation, and procrastinating decisions because you're afraid to do them wrong. And rereading emails you've already sent because you don't trust yourself.

It's interfering with your personal relationships. It is blocking you from your dreams. You cannot create your dream life. You cannot do what you were put in the world to do, whatever that is if you are not able to claim the authority to direct your own life. The most important thought work you can do is to work on claiming your own authority over your own life. Everything else flows from that.

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 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.