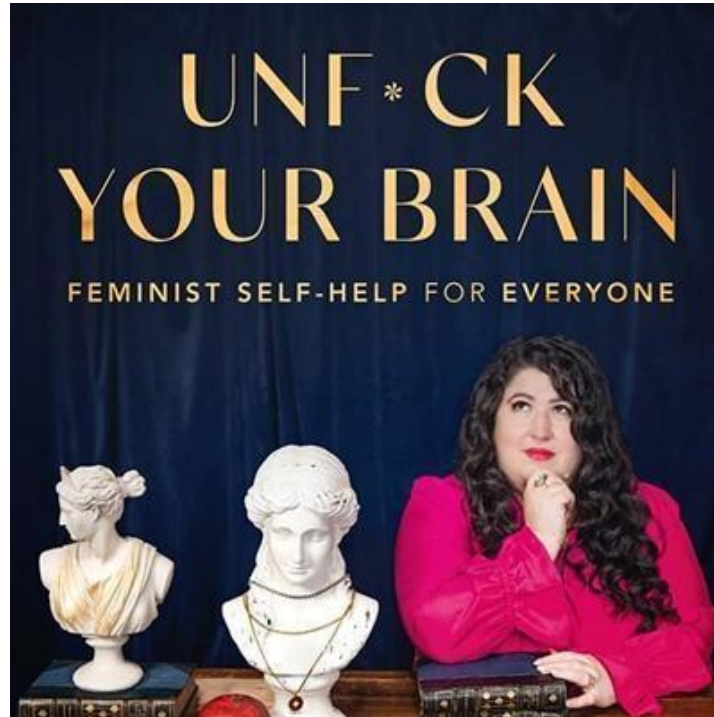


UFYB 105: Listener Q&A Vol. 15



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 we are doing something fun and different this episode. I've done listener Q&As in the past of course before, but usually those have been somebody would write in with a long coaching question and I was basically coaching them.

And so what I'm going to do today is answer some questions that I solicited on Instagram. So listen, do not rush to Instagram and send me a DM with your questions. This was a 24-hour thing. I put it in my stories, I got a bunch of questions. If you have questions for a listener Q&A podcast, you should keep emailing them to my team as you have been.
info@redesignyourmind.com

But I am going to answer some of the questions that I got from you guys during that 24 hours. So they're kind of all over the place. Some of them are kind of coaching questions, some of them are about my business and my journey. There were some questions about my dating and sex life that I'm not going to answer.

So we're just going to answer some of these and I think it'll be instructive for you guys. It's going to be fun. Okay, first question was, "What made you decide to change careers from a lawyer to a life coach?"

So that's actually a great question and partly because I think I teach a lot about how to love where you are before you leave it, and then people see that I left my career and so they think well, you changed your career, obviously you thought you'd be happier as a life coach.

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That's not exactly right because what happens when you take responsibility for your own life and your own emotions is that you understand that it's not the circumstances of your job that make you happy or unhappy. So I did a lot of work on my relationship to my job as an academic and to my academic career, and I could totally have been happy as a law professor.

I mean, actually a lot of what I do is similar. The content is different but I used to do feminist theory and law so in law school, you're teaching people how to think in a new way. So a lot of it actually is similar. Like as a law professor, I think I would have been teaching people how to think in a new way using feminist theory to provide that kind of insight going against probably the grain, the way I do now, of how most people teach and think about law. Helping people feel empowered.

I mean, I would have been doing a lot of the same things, just a very different kind of context and life and I didn't love creating scholarship. And here's the other thing; it's like, that's kind of the same. I prefer life coaching to writing coaching content, just like I preferred teaching the law to writing law review articles.

You are you and your brain is your brain wherever you go. So while I did do a lot of work on my relationship to my academic career and how I could be happy in it, and that's what enabled me to decide to leave and become a coach because I knew I could be happy and okay either way. But it wasn't like oh, I hate the law and I hate reading and writing and thinking about the law and I'm going to love reading and writing and thinking about coaching.

No. A lot of what I do is similar. The things I like are similar. The things that are my less favorite parts are actually similar. And I could coach myself on those things but there's a lot of things in life to coach yourself on and right now I don't feel that I need to coach myself on preferring life coaching to writing coaching content.

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I do both. I do both well. They work fine in my business, it's fine with me to slightly prefer one to the other. But I'm just giving you that example because it's me and what I like to do that's the same. All that didn't change just because I changed the circumstances, the context in which I was doing it.

But this is what I will say about it; I do think as an academic, I was working on ideas that nobody else would do because I think we all have our own unique flavor of things. And so nobody else is going to write the exact law review article I would write. Nobody was going to teach law the exact way I taught it.

And there are some losses there; whatever I was going to come up with in the law, I never will now in that context. But I felt that number one, I felt like I had figured out how to succeed in that career, and I'm someone who always wants to be learning something new and doing something different and figuring out how to master a new thing.

And so having learned how to master the kind of life where you work within institutions and you get exclusive prestigious jobs and you do very well in school and I had learned how to do that, and it kind of felt like the rest of my life was going to be more of the same if I stayed there. And quitting to become a life coach and entrepreneur was going to be very, very different, and I just wanted to have a different experience. I wanted to experience what that was like.

And I also felt like when it came to thought work, while there are for sure - again, nobody will write the exact law review articles I would have written, there are a lot of people working in the areas I was working and coming up with good arguments and I didn't really feel like the world was going to be - the world was going to lose out if it didn't have my particular law review articles or theory there.

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And I did feel like what I wanted to bring to life in the thought work world was very unique and that nobody else was doing it. Not cognitive thought work. There's lots of people doing that and a lot of these ideas have been around for thousands of years.

But combining it with feminist theory, doing kind of rigorous feminist mindset work, which is what I do, I didn't think anybody else was doing that. And so I felt like one of my personal values is to be of service to the world and I felt like the way I could be of service in this job was bigger and more unique than the way I could be of service somewhere else.

And I thought that I would learn all these new things and I would get to have this whole other experience I wanted to have. So this is - on some level it's an advanced topic and something we work on - you work with me after the basics, but like, what does it mean? The reason I love this question is that most of us think we only want something because we think it's better than what we have. Or else why would we want it?

Why would we change something unless we think we'll be happy if we change it? And that thought process is so common but it just shows how unmeshed you are in your current belief that external things make us feel a certain way. Because what you learn once you do the work is that you know you can be happy no matter what and that doesn't mean happy all the time because life isn't just about positivity.

But it means whatever the job is, whatever the marriage is, whatever the anything is, the external thing is not going to determine how you feel and so then the question is just do you want to experience something different? And it's kind of revolutionary to think that that's a good enough reason.

Especially for women, who I think always think they have to justify why they want something. It's okay to want something just because it's different and you want to experience it. It's okay to be happily married and decide that

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you want to experience not being married or being single or being married to someone else.

It's okay to be a happy professor and decide you want to experience being a life coach, or vice versa. Just because you want to have a different experience and learn something new. So that's the answer to that.

Alright, next question. Someone asked, "Do niches matter?" So what they mean by that - this is a life coach question, but I'm going to explain it because I think it'll be helpful for everybody.

What they mean is does it matter if you have a specific niche for your business, like one of my colleagues coaches doctors who want to lose weight and one of my colleagues coaches women who want to take a break from drinking, and one of my colleagues coaches women who have difficult relationships with their mothers, or whatever.

So that's a niche. It's like a group of people that you help. So here's the answer; yes and no. A niche is not magic. So a niche does not matter in the sense that there's no niche in the world that will make you always feel happy and motivated and make the first year and 100K of your coaching business easy.

There's no niche that will do that. So it doesn't matter in that sense. The experience of building a business is always going to be the same. It is always going to be something of a hustle. It is always going to be challenging. You're going to have to deal with a lot of your own thoughts and wanting to die.

And what happens is we're in a niche and we're having that experience and so we fantasize that if we just had another niche, everything would be better. And one of the reasons I'm answering this question is that it's not just about a niche. People do this with partners. They think if I just had a

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partner, I'd be happy. Then they get a partner, they're not magically happy, and then they're like, well, if I just had this different partner.

We do it with jobs. We do it with families. We do it with bodies. Anything. We're like, I'm not happy and this is my circumstance. My niche, my job, my body, my boss, my boyfriend, whatever. So I just need to change this. If I had this other one, then everything would be perfect.

So a niche doesn't matter in that sense. There's no niche out there that's just going to make it easy to build your business from the ground up. On the other hand, a niche does matter in that if you don't have one, you're making it even harder on yourself.

Trying to be a generalist life coach is very difficult because there's a lot of people out there with niches. I call it niche, you call it niche, whatever. There's a lot of people out there who have a specific niche and if somebody is looking for a coach, they're going to want to hire someone who has a niche specific to them.

Like lawyers want to hire lawyers and doctors want to hire doctors, and stay-at-home moms want to hire people who have been a stay-at-home mom if the problem has to do with being a stay-at-home mom. So they are important in the sense that it makes your marketing so much easier and it helps people know if they should hire you.

And it makes all your copy better. When you are talking generally, it's hard to have examples and it's all very vague. So if you're talking about like, numbing in general, it's so general. But if you're talking about stay-at-home moms who numb by drinking a glass of wine or smoking a joint as soon as the kids go to bed every single night, now all of a sudden you have a really specific problem that people can relate to, and they feel like you've been where they are and you know what's going on with them.

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So niches are very important in that way. So I really stand by what I was taught early on, which was you pick a niche. You have to test it. You got to make sure you can find people who fit your niche. It should be people that are easy to find that would be gathered somewhere that you can reach through some kind of media or whatever.

You pick a niche and then you commit to it for a year. Your niche is not there to make your life easy. Your niche is there for you to love it and figure out how to serve it. So that is my answer to that.

Okay, and somebody asked, “Did you go through a robot phase when you learned the model and started coaching?” So I don’t know exactly what that means because there’s two things I think it could mean but I’m going to answer it both because I think people experience both.

And so one thing it can mean is that as just a person, you can start to feel a little disconnected or unemotional. That’s how you think you’re feeling. That’s our thought about - basically what happens is we stop being emotionally volatile lunatics, and then our brains are like, this is disconnected. You’re like a robot now because you’re not gleeful with validation one minute and then weeping in the bathroom the next minute.

Our brains are like, see, that’s being a robot. But really, it’s more like emotional sobriety. It’s like, not being on a roller coaster. It’s like getting off a roller coaster and walking on flat ground. At first it’s not going to feel that dramatic but over time as you get used to it, you’re going to notice like, smaller inclines and declines and the flowers along the way and all of that comes back.

So I do think there’s almost withdrawal that can go on where you’ve conditioned yourself to experience these huge swings in your emotions. You have no emotional resilience, and so you’re up and down, up and

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down, up and down, and when you stop being that way, it can feel kind of weird.

And you might feel a little disconnected from all the people around you who are up and down and up and down and up and down all the time, but over time, you start to - it's like not eating sugar for a month and then honey tastes really sweet. It's like there are natural kind of highs and lows that you begin to experience. You can experience more nuanced subtlety and smaller shifts. You don't feel like a robot.

And my experience has really been on the other side of that is that I never used to cry at movies or at the theatre. I wasn't really moved by art or even other people that much because of course, I was just so in my own roller coaster, and now I cry at TV shows.

I'm actually much more susceptible to empathy or just to pure emotion flowing through me. But it always ends quickly. It's a very pure, clean process it feels like. It's the opposite of being a robot.

And then the other way this person could mean this question, which I'll answer briefly because it'll just be for coaches is when you learn how to coach from someone, yeah, you sound like them for a while. It's normal. Eventually, you just start getting your own way of thinking and talking about things and your own clients make you think and talk in different ways and you don't end up sounding like a robot forever.

Okay, let's do one or two more. Someone says, "Do you have any tips for how to practice new thoughts and getting them to stick?" Okay, so here's my answer to this question, which I think is important. Thinking about getting your thoughts to stick is the wrong way to think about it.

Because when something is sticky, you can just slap it on something and it stays there. So it has you predisposed - it seems like a little thing, this word

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choice, but it has you predisposed to thinking about your thoughts as though they should be like that. Like you should just have to apply them a couple of times and then they'll stick.

That's not how it works. That's not how you should think about your thoughts. You should think about your new thoughts in terms of thinking about how can I carve a groove in this rock with a toothpick. Like you have to go over it over and over again. Maybe a groove in a rock is a little intense.

But how can I carve a groove in like, cold butter with a toothpick. I don't know what the metaphor would be like. It's not impossible. It's totally doable, but it takes a lot of repetition to do that so it's not about getting them to stick. It's about making them a default habit.

You're turning a thought into a habit. A brain habit. So it's like if you're right-handed, trying to learn to write left-handed. You wouldn't be like, what are some tips and tricks for making it stick that I can all of a sudden be left-handed. No. You would be like, I have to practice writing with my left hand a lot and then eventually it will become my default.

It's not quite as hard as that thankfully, but I don't think thinking of your thoughts as how to get them to stick is a good idea because even that framing is setting you up to feel like you're entitled to your thoughts changing much too quickly. You have to practice repeating your thoughts until the habit switches over from the old thought to the new thought.

There's no trick other than practice. I mean, we have a list in The Clutch of like, different ways to practice kind of, like reminders or Post-It notes or passwords or whatever. Different kind of things you can do to jog your memory, but there's no trick that gets around. It needs to be repetition. The answer to that.

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Okay. Let's do one more. Somebody says, "How do you deal with a firm that feels like high school? Cliques, rumors, bullies, oh my." Okay, so high school is not a feeling. That's a thought. You have a thought this firm feels like high school. Cliques, bullies, and rumors, none of those are circumstances. Those are not true objective things outside of you. Those are your thoughts about what's going on.

So my guess is just from this question that this question asker has a kind of me versus them and kind of victim thought process going on. They're in emotional childhood. Other people are cliquey, other people are bullies, other people have rumors and I'm left out and I'm on the outside. How do I deal with this?

And obviously this may be a story that this person's had since high school because it sounds like she's just carried that story over. So the question isn't how do you deal with a firm that feels like a high school. The question is how do you work on your thoughts to understand that those are all optional thoughts about your firm, not true facts that you have to believe.

This is a classic thought work issue. How do you become aware of and change your own thoughts about your job, about your firm? Rather than just believing everything you think and then trying to figure out how to deal with all these negative things that you think are happening to you.

So that's the kind of thing that you actually need to use thought work to really unpack and use the coaching model to unpack. That's the kind of thing that requires sort of sustained thought work.

So I think that's it for this week. If I didn't answer your question, I may get to it in a future one.

Alright my chickens, I'll talk to you next week.

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