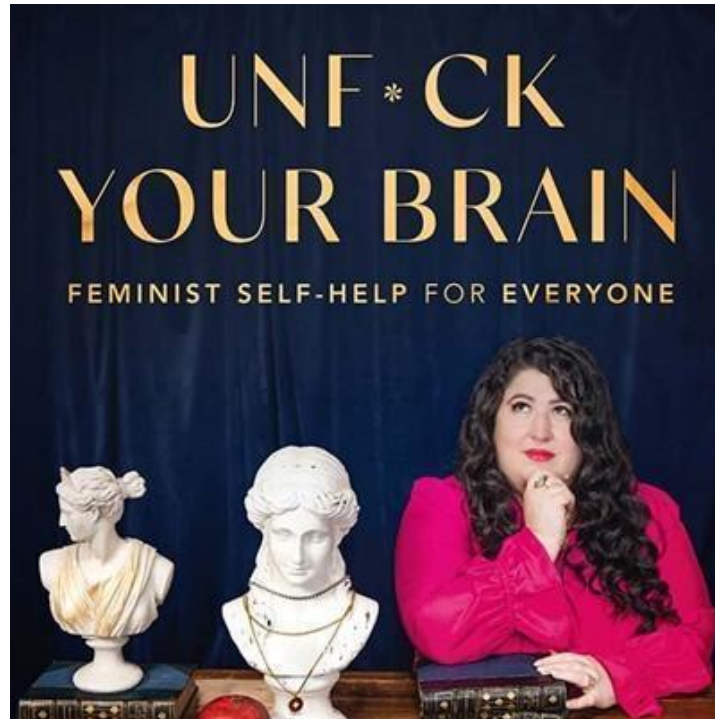


# UFYB 242: What Is Human Nature and How Do You Motivate Yourself



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

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

## **UFYB 242: What Is Human Nature and How Do You Motivate Yourself**

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, if you have been listening to this podcast then you know that my mission with all of this work is to teach people socialized as women how to liberate and empower themselves from the inside out. Because ultimately every challenge that you are dealing with in your life, and every response you have to those challenges, is impacted by the way you were taught to think about yourself.

Women are socialized to believe that we don't have inherent worth, value, authority, or even the right to just exist without pleasing other people, serving other people, and getting everyone to like us and approve of us at all times. Right? We are socialized to believe that our value is contingent on what everyone else thinks of us and how much we do for everyone else. And that impacts the way that we show up in every single area of our lives.

It impacts how we show up at work, in our personal relationships, in our family, in our parenting, the way we relate to our own physical bodies, our appearances, how our bodies feel, our sexuality, our work, our creative process, our self-development, even our hobbies. It is pervasive. And that is the root cause of so much of our suffering. And it is the path to so much of our liberation, and that is what I teach you how to do inside The Clutch.

The Clutch is my monthly feminist coaching program and we have been closed to the public for six months, more than that I think, seven months. We have been creating a brand new Clutch experience with new courses on every topic that women like you are working on. On work stress and imposter syndrome, on romantic relationships, on family relationships and

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parenting, on sex and sexuality, on friendships, on social anxiety, on trauma and your nervous system.

Whatever area this socialization is showing up in for you, wherever you are doubting yourself, undermining yourself, criticizing yourself, overworking yourself, burning yourself out or in whatever area you just can tell you are not really flourishing and thriving. Wherever you're just surviving. Wherever you can feel you have room and space to grow and blossom and you want to live a badass life, you just aren't sure how to get there. That is what I will teach you how to create for yourself inside The Clutch.

Hello, my chickens. How are we? I am super into today's podcast episode. I mean I'm generally into the podcast, that's why I do it. But I really am in love with this particular topic because it's something that I coach about so often. And I think it really kind of lies at the base of so many questions that you guys have about thought work and that I hear about thought work. And I sort of came up with this topic as a standalone episode as I was working through all the new material that I have created for the redesign of The Clutch. The Clutch is my feminist coaching community and we have completely revamped it. And so, I've been working on the content and kind of thinking about the questions that come up the most often from people who listen to the podcast or are engaging with my work.

So, as I was working on some of the new teaching, and the new tools, and the new exercises that I created for the new Clutch I was thinking about what are the common questions that come up? And so many people's concerns and questions about thought work hinge on this question, which most of us never even think to address. And I'm going to sort of talk to you a little bit about what the questions are before I kind of identify what is the issue that people don't think about.

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So, I often get asked questions like, well, if we don't believe we cause other people's feelings, won't we just turn into selfish assholes or become arrogant narcissists? Or if I don't criticize and judge myself, and drive myself hard, then I'll just sit on the couch and never accomplish anything again, won't I? Or if we don't agree on what's objectively right or wrong then won't we all descend into anarchy and violence? So, these are totally legitimate questions. They're a little extreme because brains are extreme.

But I love when my students engage at this level because it shows that they are really thinking about the material. And one of the things that I really love about The Clutch is that I think that we are doing this self-development work, this kind of self-inquiry, this kind of thought work at such a sophisticated level that really is unique to our community and to having kind of people who are really intellectually engaged with this work. So, I love that these questions come up.

But here's what I want you to ask yourself, that you may never have thought about before and that all these questions kind of hinge on. It's really a two part question. What is your vision of human nature and where did this vision come from? Let's say that again. What is your vision of human nature? What are your beliefs about what humans are naturally like? And where did you get these beliefs? And the third question would be, do you want to keep them?

So, this is one of the oldest philosophical questions in the world. People have been talking about this since they figured out how to talk. What is the nature of humans? What are humans like? Without society, what are humans like? And I think we can say at a general level that there are two competing visions of what human nature is like. One is that humans are sort of naturally mean, and cruel, and predatory, and lazy, and sinful. And you may not think of it religiously, so you might not use the word sinful.

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But you may still have this unconscious belief system that humans are sort of naturally turned towards doing bad things, being mean to each other, hurting each other, stealing from each other, being selfish, excluding each other, hoarding resources, whatever. That is one belief about kind of what humans are like. That's on some inherent essential level.

And I should also say that when I say human here, traditionally historically most of the conversation has been about what's the nature of men because usually women have been considered the sort of separate subsidiary category that had its own nature. Women had their own specific nature that was different from men. That's kind of one of the linchpins of heteronormative society. So, I'm going to talk a little bit more about how ideas of the nature of women play into this a little bit later in this episode. But here I'm just talking about kind of the nature of humans in general.

So that first view is that humans are inherently sinful and bad. And again, sinful is a particularly religious word, you may not think of it in religious terms. But the idea is that humans need rules, and fear, and punishment to keep them acting correctly. This kind of view of humans gives rise to the belief that we need to basically create society through forcefully suppressing, or managing, or controlling humans natural inclinations. And so, the ideas that society depends on a lot of negative reinforcement to function. And the ideas that without that we would have chaos.

So, this is the vision of humanity that gives rise to the story of Adam and Eve in the Bible. The idea that man is inherently sinful or rather that women are inherently sinful. But this isn't limited to the Bible and this idea of human nature existed before the Bible. The Bible's just articulating it and then in countries where Christianity became very dominant, this belief system about human nature became very dominant.

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On the other side what would be the alternative to that would be a belief system in which we see in human nature as essentially good, that we are inherently kind of cooperative, kind, caring, that we want to support and help each other. And that the problems that we see under the first system, the ideas, the problems we see in the world are because of human nature being problematic and society not regulating it enough.

And this belief system where humans are sort of essentially good, then we see the theory being that the problems in the world are caused by something kind of interfering or fucking up humans' inherent social cooperation, kindness and support. Whatever you believe that is, whether it's systems or government, or religion, or capitalism, or something else. So, the point being kind of two different world views. And I'm not saying these are the only possible world views.

These are just kind of two big ones that humans are kind of inherently bad or in need of a lot of discipline, and structure, and punishment to keep them on the straight and narrow, and keep society functioning. Or that humans are inherently good, humans are inherently kind of supportive, and kind, and helpful, and empathetic and whatever else. And that when we do have social problems it's because something has gotten in the way of that.

So, on top of the kind of general socialization we have about the nature of humans then women are socialized with specific beliefs about what women are inherently like. And depending on where you live this may be different but I would say that in western societies that have been kind of predominantly influenced by Christianity. We are really socialized much more towards the former of those two world views, that humans are inherently sinful, inherently greedy, and lazy, and gluttonous, and violent, and whatever else.

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And that we need sort of religion and government to control us, to keep us from total chaos. And then on top of that you have the fact that throughout western society in the last 2,000 years women have been considered inferior to men. And in order to justify the oppression of women, all these ideologies have developed that women are weak, women are dependent, women are lazy. Men need to supervise and direct women. That they are sort of intellectually inferior, they can't be trusted, we can't leave things up to their judgment and their authority. They need supervision.

And of course, other marginalized identities you may live in, there may be even more layers of additional socialization about kind of what the nature of you, or your community, or your background, or your family are like that play into this. But here's the bottom line truth. There is really no way to know. Because no humans exist outside of some human society that influences and shapes us. Even an isolated tribe in the Amazon is living in its own complex structure in society. It has nothing to do with it being western civilization or more sort of mainstream civilizations.

Every human society has its own civilization. Every human society has its own structure, its own society, its own social rules, its own belief systems. And so, there's no human that we can use as the test case for what humans are 'really' like. We can't ever run a study that tells us that because just from being a human and being alive you are deeply socialized by whatever the belief systems, and social norms, and customs, and thoughts, and theories are of your community.

So, what that means is we just have to decide what to believe. You just have to decide. Do you want to believe that you are kind of fundamentally cruel, and mean, and selfish? Do you want to believe that you're inherently lazy, and stupid, and boring? Or do you want to choose to believe that you naturally want to contribute, that you naturally want to be helpful to others, that you naturally want to build, and create, and serve yourself and others?



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If you ask me, given that humans evolved in small tribal groups it's way more likely that we naturally evolved to be closer to cooperative and contributing than to selfish, and hoarding, and mean, and cruel. Small interdependent tribes don't work very well if everyone is hoarding food and murdering each other all the time. And now, I'm not saying that I have a utopian vision of human nature. Obviously humans have a very long history of hurting each other within groups and certainly with groups they see as outsiders and not like them.

So, this is not about kind of it's all puppies and rainbows until modernity messed it up. But fundamentally you have to choose what you think you would be like without a sort of punitive policing version of society that exists within your own head now that you've internalized. And I fundamentally choose to believe that being cruel to ourselves or other people, abusing ourselves or other people, oppressing ourselves or other people is not necessary to keep society running or to keep us behaving in ways that align with our values.

And honestly, if it is then who wants to be in that society? Then we need to remake the society. So, you get to decide for yourself and I just say, let's look at the evidence. So far if you listen to this podcast you have probably beaten yourself up, and criticized yourself, and tried to control everyone else's emotions, and tried to motivate yourself with guilt, and fear, and shame. And that's what people are doing all over the world. And is the world really the way we want it to be?

Does this set of beliefs seem to be getting us good results? Because here's the next level of this. Even if there was some kind of fundamental human nature we could discern outside of society, we all know that our thoughts – well, those of us who listen to this podcast know, our thoughts create our results. So, we've all been told the thoughts collectively, that humans are selfish, and greedy, and violent, and lazy, and need to be controlled. And



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that we need to use guilt and shame to motivate ourselves, and to make sure we conform to social behavior.

If we believe that's true, what are we going to get? We're going to get results that prove it true. If we believe that that's what humans are like then that's what we're going to produce for ourselves. So, what would we get if we decided to believe in a different version of human nature? You can think about that question on a global scale or you can think about it just for yourself. What would it be like if you didn't assume that you had to use guilt, and shame, and self-criticism to motivate yourself? What if that's just what you've been taught and you've never stopped to question it?

What if you removed guilt, and shame, and obligation and it turned out that sometimes you chose to do what you wanted to do and not to go to that event, or help that person out, or do whatever else you do out of guilt. But a lot of the times you did choose to participate from a willing loving place. Why would that be a worse outcome? What if it's just that you've been taught that you're inherently bad and that you need to use these punitive emotional tools on yourself and you've never stopped to question it?

If you know little children think about that, are little children inherently lazy, and slovenly, and well, they're messy, but are little kids inherently lazy with no desire to create? Do little kids never want to imitate you, and help you, and be like you? Do they never make friends or show empathy? Do they never have creativity and imagination? Do they never show love? No, of course they do all those things. And do you think that little children benefit from harsh punishment to keep them in line?

And if that's not how you would treat a child then that means that you don't really believe that that's what human nature inherently requires. So why are you treating yourself that way? What if you change those beliefs for yourself as well?

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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](http://www.unfuckyourbrain.com/society). I can't wait to see you there.