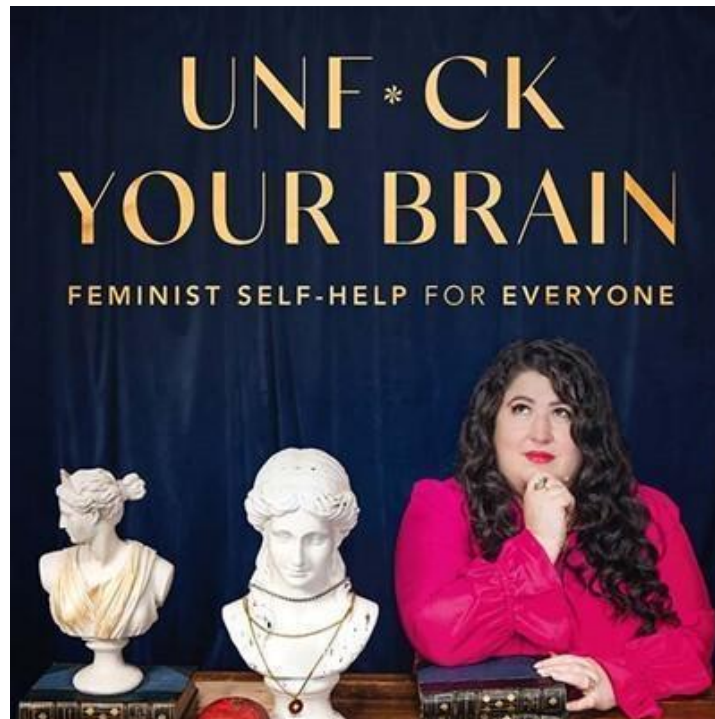


**UFYB 257: Social Conditioning,
Religion, Men & Patriarchy:
A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

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.

Kara: Hello my chickens. We, today are having what I feel like is actually a very overdue conversation on this podcast. And I know that some of you who listen to this podcast who are men, or are non-binary, or identify with different masculine archetypes or energies or identities or whatever have already been using what's on the podcast and applying it to the way that you were socialized if you were socialized as a man or you are now being socialized and subject to social messaging around masculinity.

That was not the most concise way to say that, but this is my first podcast recording on a Monday. But today we're going to have a more explicit conversation about that. So I am really excited to talk about this. One of the things that has been on my mind for a long time is how to create the branch of this work that works on men's patriarchal socialization.

Obviously there are men out there doing that, it's not like I invented that. But I think this blend of thought work and socialization work has so much to offer people who are not socialized as women.

So I'm very excited to have this conversation and I'm here with my student, Lindsey Poelman, who just went through my Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching and her husband, Danny Poelman, who will potentially, I refer to him as my once student and my potential future student who may come through this next round. Which answers an important question that

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

we always get, which is can men apply to the certification, and the answer is absolutely.

So today we are going to talk about patriarchy in two different ways. One is what it's like as a man to recognize your own patriarchal socialization and to start working on it and why that's important. And then also some of the ways that we talk a lot about patriarchy's negative impacts on women, but also its negative impacts on men.

So why don't you two first just, I've given your names, but tell us like what you do, how you got to this topic, just give us a little background.

Lindsey: Yeah.

Danny: Sure, I'll go. Thanks, Kara, yeah, I'm already your student, I've been listening to your podcast for years.

Kara: True, I should have said there's, of course, many ways to be a student.

Danny: Yeah, I've learned so much from you and that's part of why I'm here, because something that, in short, that I have noticed for me, a trend, is the more that I learn about patriarchy and how it's all set up and some of the water that I've been swimming in throughout my life, the more my life gets better.

And so even just from a purely selfish standpoint I benefit a lot from this work, and I don't think that's a bad thing. But also I love how it can help so many other people on the way as well.

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

So I am from a family of attorneys, so I thought you might like that. I thought I was really breaking off by going the dentist route because I was a dentist for a little while before I became a coach.

Yeah, basically grew up in the LDS church, high demand Christian religion and so had a lot of good experience with the patriarchy there, even before I knew it. And then I think what really helped bring me to this conversation, there's so many things, but one of the big things that happened for me is in my early 30s I had some memories come up, traumatic in nature, from being sexually abused as a boy. And it was with a trusted adult in the family.

And basically working through all of that I ended up in this position where I had something that was important or me to talk about in order to heal and find the balance in my life that I wanted because I had some major PTSD symptoms going on.

So as Lindsey helped me through a lot of this we learned so much together through it. But basically I was in a position where I started talking about this thing that felt off to me and was being told by some people to stay quiet or that they just didn't want to be around me if I was going to talk about it like that. But I just knew that it was off on some level.

And so going through that and experiencing the pain of that, I think it was an experience for me that almost compelled me to be more open to where else is that happening in the world and in our society? Because I know for women, or people socialized as women, that they have the same experience, like something seems out of balance and off here and I even have these symptoms that I'm experiencing. And then I bring it up and people are like, "No, be quiet, we don't want to talk about it."

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Anyway, so that was a big part of what even brought us to coaching and part of my journey. What do you want to add?

Kara: Who do you coach now?

Danny: What's that?

Kara: Who do you coach? Who do you work with now?

Danny: Yeah, that's what I was going to say, the last four years or so I've been coaching men who want to stop looking at porn or just have more self-control with their habits with porn.

I'm not on a mission as silly as stop all porn use ever as much as let's talk about this in a shame-free empowering way. And if that's what you want for you in your life, how do we do it in a way that brings more ease, sustainability, and even fun too?

And what I've noticed in that work is, this is another reason why I'm here today, I work with men and the more that I learn about patriarchy, the more I see that benefiting my coaching and my clients because I'm just that much more equipped to identify some of those areas where the power is a little bit misaligned. Which doesn't only hurt women, it hurts men too in my experience.

Kara: Yeah, people of any gender identity, I think.

Danny: Yeah.

Kara: Lindsey, what about you?

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Danny: Yeah, thanks for bringing the more expansive language. I need to practice that more.

Lindsey: Yeah, so my name is Lindsey Poelman and I started out coaching for women whose husbands looked at porn. So we were like we were our own avatars. And it's been so fascinating to work with the women I've worked because a lot of them are experiencing, again, betrayal, trauma, PTSD like symptoms and things like that.

And what I started noticing maybe a year and a half in was just how some of these patriarchal constructs and belief systems are just really layering into the shame and the pain that a lot of the women are feeling. And so it's been so incredible to support women, help them put context behind what they're feeling because it's such a quicker way to just validate people, to educate and provide understanding and context for what they're going through.

And so I feel like I've done that from a trauma lens. But bringing in this patriarchal lens, especially with the terminology and everything that I've learned in your program has been incredibly impactful. And then what I do now primarily is I run certifications for coaches who want to be trauma informed.

The way that you bring in this patriarchal, all the different constructs, not constructs but constructs, contexts, feminism and things like that, I do that with trauma for coaches. Like that kind of layer for them to have more understanding of clients and things like that to make sure we're supporting them in ways that they need and deserve for healing to happen.

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Kara: Yeah, I love that. And I want to just, I guess, offer some context to this because I think some of the people listening may identify with that already. For some of the people listening it may seem like porn, what's the big deal? There's probably a lot of sex positive feminists and porn positive feminists who listen to the podcast.

But obviously, one of the things we talk about all the time with thought work is it all depends on what your frame of reference is and what you're taught to expect and what you're taught things mean. So if you grow up in a high demand Christian religion where you are taught that porn is bad and sinful and should never be watched, then it's going to be very distressing to discover that your partner is watching it right? Or it's going to be very distressing and feel compelled to watch it.

So I think people can have a use of porn that is problematic for their lives regardless of their religious background, obviously. But I think it's such a perfect example of something that to some people is no big deal and then to some people it's really traumatizing. And there are things in secular context that seem like very traumatizing, that might seem like no big deal in a religious context. It all depends on what your set of expectations are.

Danny: Totally.

Lindsey: Yeah, like I grew up when I would hear and see couples and families getting divorced, what I would hear women say, like the moms around me would use something like, oh, he was looking at porn, or oh, he was doing this. And so many of us have internalized, okay, so just marry someone who doesn't look at porn. But then we all know how common pornography is, whether you're in a religion, not in a religion, it's super, super common.

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

But being a woman, when your husband is looking and you have no control and you feel like everything could go to pot down to like eternal families being broken and things like that, it can feel so incredibly distressing and traumatizing and confusing. So cleaning all that up is just so much more impactful.

And a lot of it, again, is helping women learning everything and learning all these different things so they can turn inward and heal in a way that they can support themselves whether there husband is stopping, not stopping, or has already stopped.

Kara: Okay, we could have a whole other podcast about porn, obviously, which would be interesting. But we're going to focus here. I was like one of the things I loved about getting trained at LCS was there are so many people who are in the LDS church or have left the LDS church. And I think it was super valuable to have this set of concerns that are so different from mine and to be in a position of hearing those, seeing how like something that might be a big deal to me.

Like my partner said to me, not to say that everybody in the LDS church or any religious community thinks this. But if I look at Orthodox Jews, like if my partner said to me I think God made you to have the babies and clean the house, I would be deeply traumatized and upset about our relationship. And I would really, like that would be a really big problem and we would need therapy. Whereas if I have orthodox cousins that I think that if there husband said that to them they'd be like, yeah, obviously, no big deal.

So just to say for anybody who listens I have more of a secular listenership, although not totally, it goes both ways. Like whatever your frame of reference is very unique to you and there will be things that seem like no

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

big deal that would traumatize people with other frames of reference, and vice versa. It's not just like a one way street.

So we're going to talk some about how the patriarchy impacts us. And I love one of the first questions you sent me and suggested I ask you, which I think is a good one so I'm just going to take it. Which was why it's okay and maybe necessary for privileged white men to feel disempowered.

And you had put disempowered by the patriarchy, so I want to talk about that. But I also want to talk about why is it okay and even positive to feel all the complex feelings that may come up when women around you start talking about the patriarchy?

Like having watched Lindsey's journey over the last five years and knowing her in the coaching world, I feel like she's turned into a firebrand. Like she is, watching that journey happen has been really amazing and so I'm curious what that was like for you, Danny, and how do you deal with those emotions that come up?

Danny: I don't think I've had any resistance to that stuff. You used to tell me that I was more of a feminist than you were earlier on.

Kara: I got to her now, though.

Lindsey: No, seriously, I think there was a time where it seemed like you were and it bothered me. It really bothered me, I was like, why can't we be more traditional? But anyway, keep going.

Kara: Oh, interesting. I want to hear more about that sometime. Okay, sorry, go ahead.

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Lindsey: That was years ago, but yes, definitely was a thing.

Danny: Yeah, it was. Here's what I'll say to this question, I don't know if it's answering it exactly but it'll keep the conversation going.

Kara: We'll get there eventually, one way or the other.

Danny: Yeah, we'll get there. No, but for me the way that I see it is I don't think that anyone is born sexist or prejudice. I don't think we come that way. I just don't. We learn it along the way. And I think that our more natural balanced healthy state of being even as humans is to unlearn a bunch of that stuff. And that's just been my personal experience, I don't get to speak for everybody.

But yeah, an experience comes to mind for me, a couple, two experiences. Where I was in dental school, I was the elders quorum president. The elders quorum is like a group of men above the age of 18 who there's an hour set aside at church where they meet together on Sundays and they coordinate activities and service things together.

And anyway, I was the president and I was super involved and went to this bigger leadership meeting where it was not just from our local ward, as we call it, our local community that means together. But it was maybe five communities from the area meeting together. So we had all the leaders from all of the wards at a stake leadership meeting. You don't need to remember these words.

Kara: Is there going to be a quiz on the terminology?

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Danny: So I walk to this meeting, I'm excited. Yeah, cool, other people in leadership positions, this is going to be a cool experience. And I walked into this big chapel room that was full of people. And out of the 100 people there, or however many, there were like five women.

And I remember that was like one of the first times, I was already like in my mid 20s and I'd grown up in this my whole life. And I remember walking into that meeting and just being like, "Wait a second, where are all the women? Like we need the women here, this seems off."

Anyway, so that was just one of those funny wake up moments. But I think for whatever reason I actually really have learned to enjoy those wake up moments, even though at times I feel a little bit embarrassed about it or whatever. I just enjoy it because I like being a part of doing something that works better.

And then one of my other experiences that comes to mind is just being around like my biological father, he would say things at a family gathering sometimes like, oh, I just wish that my wife was as submissive as so and so's wife. And people would just stay quiet while this was being said.

And inside as a younger person, I was just like, huh? That didn't feel right to me. And the adults around me weren't saying anything so I was like, is that just the way that some people do it and that's okay?

Anyway, but I remember that felt off. And so for me, my journey and learning about patriarchy and feminism and some of these things that are out of whack in the way our culture is set up, it almost feels like I'm remembering things that I already knew on some level. And then it just

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

feels really validating and healing to keep opening my eyes up to it. And then I look back at all these times, oh yeah, no wonder something felt off.

And so I actually really enjoy and embrace the process of opening up to this stuff.

Kara: I think that there's two important things I want to pull out of that. One of which is that feeling of, oh, I think I used to know this. It's like a three year old doesn't, actually, well sexism can begin very early because of socialization. But there's this sort of when you're a kid you do notice those things or whatever you notice that seems unfair. And then you get socialized to believe that it's okay for some reason, or it's not a big deal, or we don't talk about it or whatever.

And so, I think it's important to remember that anytime we're talking about any kind of system I think we can get, and this is something that I know you guys have thoughts about too. Like we can get carried in a way that conflates the system with all the individuals in the system as though sort of the guy who works at the coffee shop is the reason patriarchy exists. Which like no, he's living in the system that we are all living in. We've all been socialized in this way, but nobody comes out that way.

And I think the other thing is that a lot of people do not, and maybe you more naturally feel like this. I had to do a lot of work on it in the context of not so much gender, but in the context of like white supremacy and racism and other blind spots that I will always be working on. I think people have a hard time seeing it as, oh fun, interesting, I'm learning something I was missing, this is like growth, because they feel so much shame. What they hear is you're a bad person because you didn't see this.

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

So we have this crazy thing where we're like sexist and racist are bad. By the way, we are all living in a completely sexist and racist system and it's infiltrated all of us, but because we don't want to address the system, we talk about it like it's bad apple people. There's no problem with the system, there's just some racists and some sexists.

And so that means anytime anybody's individual biases are called out or they notice them themselves, that's immediately what they go to, is well one of the bad apples. They're saying that I'm the problem, then they feel shame.

And so this perspective of this is actually just if I am learning, I'm part of changing things. So that's, right, you can turn that into a positive identity in a way that continues to like affirm and validate a positive identity for you, rather than making it mean that you're bad and wrong and you're supposed to have it perfect, which I think is really important.

Danny: Yeah, and something that comes to mind for me about our daughter, that just being a parent you get to see these kids and how they come and they come so fresh. The other day, this was last month, we were with some friends and I was telling this story that I told at times.

Lindsey: For like decades, probably.

Danny: Yeah, one of those life longers that's just stuck around.

Kara: That's what being married is, just hearing your partner tell the same story.

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Danny: Yeah, that's the way it ends. No, but it's just with the name Daniel. I go by Danny, but my official name is Daniel and sometimes they'd do the roll call in elementary school and they'd say Danielle if there as a substitute teacher, especially. And so I was just sharing this because we were talking about names in the pool with another dad and his kid. And I was like, "And whenever they'd say, Danielle I'd just get so embarrassed and be like, oh, I hate the name Danielle."

And my daughter, Maya, was there. She's 11 and she goes, "What's wrong with saying the girl version of the name?" And I was just like, "Oh my gosh, thank you, Maya."

Kara: Yeah, the kids are all right.

Danny: The first time I've called out this story and Maya helped me call it out. And I was like, "You know what, Maya? I'm so glad you said something because there's nothing wrong. And I've always told that story that way but I'm going to change how I tell it now because you're exactly right." And I was like, yes, Maya, you are getting it.

Lindsey: Yeah, it's really fun when kids start noticing some of those differences, because we've both become very acutely aware of places where we see oppression in our own individual, in our own cultures and things like that. But it's really cool when little kids start noticing things like that too.

Kara: Kids are like natural Socratic coaches. They're just like, why? What's wrong with that? Why is that a problem? It's like all the questions we ask in coaching to uncover thoughts and biases.

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Danny: And that was the other point about it, is she wasn't out to shame her dad.

Kara: Right, she wasn't like, "Got you." Totally.

Danny: She was just curious, and I didn't feel shamed, and I didn't need to be shamed. In my experience shame just gets in the way of actually changing on the deeper level where the change needs to happen for sustainable impacts to take place.

Kara: Totally.

Danny: Shame just slows that all down.

Lindsey: So I have a question, it kind of goes back to Kara's question but where do you see, and if this is irrelevant obviously you don't have to answer. But where do you see yourself and other men being disempowered by these patriarchal systems?

Kara: Hold up, back up, Lindsey. You just totally did that female socialization thing where you were like, here's a question that's totally relevant, but I'll just say just in case it's irrelevant you don't have to answer it.

Lindsey: I know, see, I still do it.

Kara: We all still do it. This might be a stupid question, not a stupid question, totally relevant.

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Danny: So this morning, getting ready for this podcast, I'm like Kara's going to call me out on stuff if it comes up. And I was a little nervous but I was like, you know what? I want that. I want it, bring it on.

Kara: Instead I got Lindsey.

Lindsey: I'm okay with it, I need it. That's why in my project I submitted my hardest part of my project to her because I'm like, I want my blind spots to be called out, because they're still there.

Kara: But that's such an important, okay, I do want Danny to answer this question. But I also want to say that's important because we see this happen in the advanced certification itself, where like people come in and they're like, they obviously want to learn it because they're there. But then there's so much that comes up personally to work through.

And I know, Lindsey, you mentioned that you have a perspective on this too. But what was your experience coming in with that? Like am I going to get called out?

Lindsey: Oh my gosh, yes, like 100% for whatever. I think like you said, we can honor everyone doing that based on where they grew up, any different geographical dynamics and cultures. But yeah, for me it was, now I'm trying to remember exactly what your question was. But yeah, there was definitely fear there.

And I remember, interestingly I think because I've been on kind of a faith expansion this year, I was more concerned about people in my same religion than the group. I was like where can I express and learn without being afraid of that then, versus these other people calling me out.

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

But there was still a little bit of that. I noticed that in my small group too, just being worried about that as well. But I think you and the group leaders and the way that you guys set everything up is so helpful because it's clear that you want to create safety for people to speak up and to not judge because everybody's in their own different places.

And so there's so much value in learning and seeing where it comes up for everybody based on their different backgrounds because it's like the same thing we're all experiencing, just different flavors.

Kara: Yeah, and I think this is actually part of the patriarchy conversation because patriarchal culture, especially some religious versions of it, is very shame oriented, right? That's the whole thing, is your thoughts are shameful, and sinful, and bad. And God knows what you're thinking and even if you have bad thoughts, you're a bad person, much less if you do bad actions.

So people project onto me or any other teacher whatever their own relationship with themselves is. If you shame yourself when you notice a blind spot, then of course your fear is that all of the certification is just me going around pointing out people's blind spots and yelling at them or something. Which obviously would not be fun for me and is not a good use of my time and it's not what we do.

But if that's the way you treat yourself, then that's the way you expect a coach, any authority figure to treat you. And that's what we learn in patriarchal power structures, is like there's a person up there in charge of you who has more authority and their job is to judge you to see if you're good or bad.

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Lindsey: Yeah, and I think that's one of my favorite takeaways of your program, is you making it clear that you are not the authority as well. And like creating that safety in a way so that we aren't trying to like get you to agree with us or to try to get that approval or whatnot.

Because I think, again, that's such a huge conditioning thing, is we're all looking for authority figures, whether it's in coaching programs or sometimes in coaches that we hire or in organizations that we've worked for. And so being able to break that down and set up this more egalitarian vibe really resonated with me. I loved it.

Kara: So good.

Danny: The talk of authority is a good lead-in into your question.

Kara: There we go

Lindsey: Perfect.

Kara: Take us there, good segue. I was just going to be like, back to your previous question.

Danny: No, because authority is one of the areas where patriarchy, I mean of course it affects women negatively, but it also affects men negatively with how authority is divvied up. How we've all agreed to do it or been born into systems that have agreed to do it that way.

And where do I start with that? First of all, one of the things I remember in our relationship is when I had my PTSD symptoms coming up, my hands were shaking and I stopped working as a dentist during the time while I was

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

getting help to figure out what was going on with me and work through it. And Lindsey had her, just all sorts of feelings about, rightfully so, about what I had just told her about my habits with porn and what I was trying to do and change and also about me not working.

And so Lindsey, in my eyes, at that time it was like Lindsey is going through this big hard thing and it's all my fault. And I think I, not till later did I realize just how much some of those ideas in the patriarchy about how like women are like these fragile butterflies or something.

Lindsey: To be taken care of.

Danny: Like I need to take care of.

Kara: Yeah, totally.

Danny: And on the one hand it's played up as a very romantic thing in lots of movies and stuff. But also it comes back to bite you, and so many of my clients too, because then rather than see her for the capable, whole complete powerhouse being that she is, she's resourceful and has the capacity to make strong decisions for herself and create results for herself and her life.

I'm buying into this thing where I'm responsible for a lot of that and that felt over-freaking-whelming to me and almost crushed me for a time there because I thought this is all on me. And when I started peeling that back and realizing what I just said, she's the whole complete powerhouse being, that's just helped our relationship hugely.

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

I think I remember when I started changing some of this, when we both were changing thoughts along the way, sometimes there was some friction from the other partner because, what, you're changing? My lower brain is used to you being a certain way and you're changing, right, rocking the boat?

So sometimes I think we both bought into this idea that some of those things were on me. And so then she continued a time or two to try to place that on me and I started saying no, that's actually not on me. Some of this is on me, but that part actually isn't and you actually can do that for you.

And she didn't like that at first in some of our experiences together, but then she totally came around and we both realized, oh, this is so much better for our relationship when we keep learning to approach it that way.

Lindsey: Yeah, but looking back I have so much compassion for myself and where I was and where he was, just because of the like constant in your face from age three on that like the man is the provider, the woman stays home in the house.

Danny: And the church we grew up in.

Lindsey: Yeah. And so for me, I did start working right away because when he had his PTSD stuff he was non-functioning for a while. So I didn't push any of that in the beginning. But then, when I decided his healing wasn't happening on the timeline I wanted, two years in I was like, I'm tired.

I think it's helpful to bring up because it's like those dynamics and ideas, I don't know if they were well intentioned so I'm not going to try to just assume that they were, but that could be a whole other podcast. But those

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

dynamics of the husband taking care of the wife, and the wife being that, it's like that conditioning was so disempowering to both of us.

Kara: Right.

Lindsey: And just seeing you with the men that you coach where they feel like they're supposed to take care of themselves, and their wives, and their kids, and their parents, and their siblings, like whether it's financially or there's just so much.

I think we don't always see how much responsibility sometimes, and I can only speak to the cultural construct that I grew up in, how much responsibility we are putting on men to be this big, huge protector, where it's wait, what about them and their body and them taking care of themselves so that they can do what they want in a more sustainable way?

Danny: Yeah.

Kara: There's so much good stuff in there. Hold on, I want to try to pull out a few of these things. So one is, I think it's also interesting that both, just like patriarchy is bad for everybody, right? And there's more than two genders, but we're talking about how patriarchy frames that there's just the two, right?

Lindsey: Yeah.

Kara: Patriarchy is like there's women, there's men, that's it. You've got to pick one, or we're going to pick one for you, really. We're just like, oh, we looked, we decided that's what you are. But that there's this like men can be socialized to feel this enormous pressure of caretaking. And then so are

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

women, right, who are socialized to feel this enormous amount of caretaking on children and the home.

And part of this is it's bad for both. And then it's also, I think, how it intersects with like capitalism and industrialization. We don't live within extended family networks as much, we live in these like isolated houses with just our nuclear family. And then everybody is trying to do what a whole care network used to do and then everybody feels overloaded.

But I think that this point that like, for the some of the people listening to this podcast are in the LDS church or used to be or in other high demand religions totally identify with this. Some of the people listening may be thinking like, I never thought my husband was supposed to be the breadwinner or whatever. But gender socialization impacts all of us.

And I do think that a lot of straight women who date men will say that they want their partner to become more feminist, more aware of his privilege, more aware of his social conditioning. But you have to be prepared that that's going to like unearth some shit for you, because you think you want that. But what you really want is a specially ordered package that like maintains the patriarchal conditioning that you like, whatever that is, and then changes the rest of it.

It's unearthing and you're going to have to grapple with your own internalized ideas of femininity, and masculinity, and misogyny, and whatever the other way would be that you may not even be aware of. All of that shit is going to come up for you too. I think it is such like a powerful process to go through.

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

This is something that my partner and I work on. There's so much there, but you have to be prepared to deal with your own. I for sure in my relationship have had to say, okay, if I want my partner to be more vulnerable, more open with his feelings, whatever, I'm going to have old socialization come up around what are my ideas of masculinity? And what are my ideas of virility? And what are my ideas of sexuality? And I'm going to have to do that work.

I think that is such a powerful process. And the problem with heteronormativity isn't that it's never okay for a partnership to decide to divvy things up in a way emotionally or physically. But it's that nobody's given the option, right?

Half the time when I listen to the somebody saying I wish my wife was more submissive or whatever, I just like when I listen to some of the high demand patriarchal religion stuff, not just Christian, I just want to be like, there's a kink for that. Not everybody needs to do it. If that's what you're into, you can negotiate that with someone else who is into it. But this doesn't have to be how the whole world works.

The more that we undo that socialization, the more that people can figure that out themselves. And I think part of what fucking makes me insane about the coaching industry is that a lot of the people when they start talking about this stuff are just like, well, masculinity and femininity are just energies that everybody has, you can swap them.

And I'm like this is not any better. We need to dismantle all the things that are associated with these words. I don't want my option to be well even though I'm a "woman" I can be the "masculine" because everybody has both. I want to be like here's 500 human attributes that we've incorrectly

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

attached to different genders. Put them all out on the table and then let's see what's what.

In my partnership I make the money mostly, and my partner takes out the trash mostly. And then our sexual dynamic works a different way and whatever. It's not just, okay, I can pick to have masculine and feminine, I want the buffet where I can put together what I want.

Danny: That's so expansive too, like the masculine and feminine words. They're useful to a certain extent, but also whenever you use words for this kind of thing they are very limiting. And like you said, if we could just take all the attributes, I love that, put them out buffet style.

One of the things that I remember when I stopped working is there was part of me that was really excited to be around my kids more and be like an at home caretaker that way during the day and not just when I was home from work.

Kara: Yeah.

Danny: But I didn't feel like that was even okay for me to want that.

Kara: Right? It's crazy how much that's still a thing.

Lindsey: Yeah.

Danny: And I thought I was like less of a man for not working in the first place, but then even just for wanting to continue some of that, and on an ongoing basis.

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Kara: That's such an example of how insane patriarchy is, it's less manly to be interested in your own children.

Danny: Yeah.

Lindsey: I know.

Danny: Yeah, I know. And that's one of those ones where it just always felt off to me. And then when I realized I didn't need to see it that way it was like, oh yeah, this feels right, and good, and healing, validating. But we have continued that, we divvy up our time with kids during the week. We both work but I've made my schedule such that I'm the at home caretaker for a good chunk of the time during the week.

That's been just one of the best blessings of my whole life. But I could have totally sabotaged that if I didn't learn to think differently about all this stuff. I could have just been like, no, get back to work 40 hours a week and you're the breadwinner and you're more of a man if you do that. I can actually do what I'm doing and I can feel great about the man that I am.

Kara: Yeah, because for you masculinity may still be a thing you identify. I think that's part of what, like the sort of queer and gender fluid people who came before us have tried to show some of us, is that all of these things can be dis-attached from gender and from your physical sex. And that you can create whatever gender expression you want for yourself, but also whatever kind of dynamic and relationship you want between just yourself or two or more people, or however many, right? Like however many pieces you want to put together.

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

I think the terms are useful in the sense that when we're talking about socialization, that's how society uses them. So it's useful to see. We are taught there are masculinity and femininity, which are also just made up human words that we've just attached to people's genitalia for some reason, and then that's supposed to stand in for whole ways of being in the world and whole types of people.

Danny: Yeah, no, I love how you said all of that. I'm with you.

Kara: All right, so I know we are running out of time. So what I would love is if there's any last point that you feel like you came on this podcast to share and you haven't gotten to, let's do that, and then tell people where they can find more about you.

Danny: Last point, when I was thinking about this morning coming to do this podcast recording with you today, one of the things that I thought summed up everything in one line is that men belong in this conversation. Everyone, not just men, let's change this, after what you just said, to be more expansive, right?

Everyone belongs in this conversation no matter what gender you identify with, or not, or non-binary. However you want to identify, everyone belongs in this conversation. That's how I would sum it up.

Lindsey: I love it.

Danny: What do you want to say?

Lindsey: I think one thing that could just be, I don't know if this will be helpful for women listening or for people who identify in that way. But I think

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

one thing that really helps a lot of my clients that I serve and a lot of humans that I serve, is that pain, like emotions aren't a zero sum game. So pain isn't a zero sum game.

So that means what if men who have been disempowered by patriarchy doesn't have to take away from how we've been disempowered or oppressed by these systems. And the beauty of that is that joy isn't a zero sum game. And so the more that we recognize that, when other women are standing in their ground in their power, we don't need to pull them down. And vice versa with men as well.

And so I think sometimes it can just be helpful for women to understand so that we're not always villainizing or thinking that he shouldn't feel bad about this because of what I've experienced too. It's just there's so much complexity and complexity to each of our own unique experiences. The more that we can just let people feel what they need to feel, the more, I think, the more of a collective healing will happen.

Kara: Yeah, I think that's so important because it's completely natural. And I have felt this too in my life, to feel like, okay, yeah, it's bad for you too but it's worse for me so I don't really feel like hearing about your problems. Or like you have so many benefits and privileges that you're still coming out ahead or whatever, just sort of that zero sum thinking.

And I'm never here to tell anyone they have to do any kind of work. Like you don't have to care about this. But if you are someone who is intimately involved with straight men or people who were socialized as society assumed that they were straight men and they are, everybody's affected by patriarchy. But I think that's the group that we most tend to be like, listen, fine, it's not great for you, but it's much worse for me and it's your fault so I

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

don't really care about your suffering here. It's like the hierarchy of suffering, right?

If you're intimately involved with people who are in that group, then it's impacting you and your relationships. And so for me it has been important to, when I say to like divorce the person from the system, it doesn't mean that I don't think that it's important for my partner to recognize his place in the patriarchy and take an action.

One of the reason I'm able to be with him is that he's, shockingly for a Midwestern, tall, white, Christian man has never said anything I found sexist, which is just mind blowing. But we still have many years to go, I'm sure maybe eventually it'll happen. But usually, it happens in the first week of knowing someone. So it's like actually quite shocking.

Obviously, I want him to be aware of that stuff, that's part of our conversations. But then also like this is a person I'm in an intimate relationship with and so it's important for me to see him in the full spectrum of his humanity. And I think, I'm not telling anybody they need to do this or have to do this, but it's not really about that deserving or hierarchy of oppression or systems. For me, it's just more about this is my human life and this is who I'm attracted to.

And now I'm partially helping participating in raising a boy and raising children. If you're going to be interacting with people who fit those archetypes, then this kind of thought process and work is going to make you better able to relate. And that sort of the hierarchy of oppression kind of thing, I think, is important when we think about structural issues. On a personal level it sometimes can get in the way of being able to relate to the person sitting across from you.

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Lindsey: Yeah.

Danny: Yeah, I like that idea. I find this a helpful way in terms of keeping the shame levels low so people can actually be more open to becoming aware of things and changing them, is just this idea that rather than picking out individuals and pick on them for them being so patriarchal and sexist, right? Let's acknowledge on some level that they are victims of the system too. And let's not get rid of any accountability, let's keep the accountability all the way along.

Lindsey: Yes.

Danny: Accountability is important and we don't have to throw that out. Please don't, that's part of what leads to the problem. But I do, I like approaching it that way. I don't mean to like go pick someone and pick on them as much as let's appreciate them. Like the leaders of the LDS church, I think they are victims of the system too in a lot of ways. And to me it helps to see it that way because it brings more compassion and understanding to the mix so that I can actually have productive conversations.

Kara: It's a more sophisticated level of power analysis for people who went to graduate school and read Foucault. I will not get into the whole thing, but like the power systems are not just unidirectional. And so people can be both benefiting from and being oppressed by any particular system, even like women don't get military drafted. That doesn't mean that we are overall coming out better than men in a system of patriarchy.

If we were doing a hierarchy, we're still losing. But there are some benefits to it, right? So like power systems are not, like a sophisticated power analysis understands that, much like intersectionality. There isn't just one

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

identities run in these different ways where you have privileges in some places and disadvantages in others. And the same is true of power systems.

I think when we can see ourselves in a like mesh of complicated differential power structures where our power changes depending on what relationship we're in, what stage of our life we're in, the context we're in, the room we're in, who we're talking to, whatever is going on. It's not only more sophisticated on the like structural intellectual understanding level, but it allows for more humanity and nuance on a personal level.

Danny: Yeah, that's a good way to say it. And men are not the patriarchy and the patriarchy is not men.

Kara: I think, we talk about this and ACFC, like one of the things that people miss sometimes is that the whole point of saying something is systemic is that you don't have to have a bad actor in place to get unjust outcomes.

So like if the criminal justice system is racist, which it is in America, it doesn't matter if the judge who's there in the seat is consciously or even unconsciously racist. What matters is everything that's going on in the system that has been created over hundreds of years to disadvantage people of color, and especially Black Americans. You're going to get unequal outcomes, even if individual actors aren't explicitly racist, and the same is true of patriarchy.

Okay, we can talk about this forever, but we are out of time so tell people where they can find you and they can continue the conversation.

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

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Lindsey: Yes.

Danny: Go ahead.

Lindsey: So people can find me at lindseypoelmancoaching.com. And I have a program for coaches who want to become trauma informed and then I have a program, self-advocacy programs for women whose husbands look at porn and also women trying to figure out basically their oppression and conditioning with respect to religion.

Kara: Love it.

Danny: You can find me at dannypoelman.com, and that's P-O-E-L-M-A-N everybody, Dutch spelling. And yeah, I work with guys one-on-one in group and I take one-on-one clients too who hire me specifically for the porn stuff. I actually love doing that and especially when it's patriarchy informed coaching.

Kara: There you go, if you've got a man in your life who wants coaching and needs some patriarchy, send him to Danny.

Danny: Yeah, that's right. And I've heard you say that you have a lot of men reach out to you about this, about wanting coaching with this stuff. Is that true?

Kara: Yes.

Danny: Because I'm like, being on this podcast I'm playing with the idea of having a landing page where I can receive guys who want that.

UFYB 257: Social Conditioning, Religion, Men & Patriarchy: A Conversation with Danny and Lindsay Poelman

Kara: Yeah.

Danny: So I want to do something like that, so maybe I'll talk with Kara about that after or something.

Kara: We'll follow up. All right my friends, chickens, have a beautiful week, I will talk to you guys soon.

Lindsey: Thanks, Kara.

Danny: Thanks for having us.

I'll see you there.

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.

[UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](http://www.unfuckyourbrain.com)