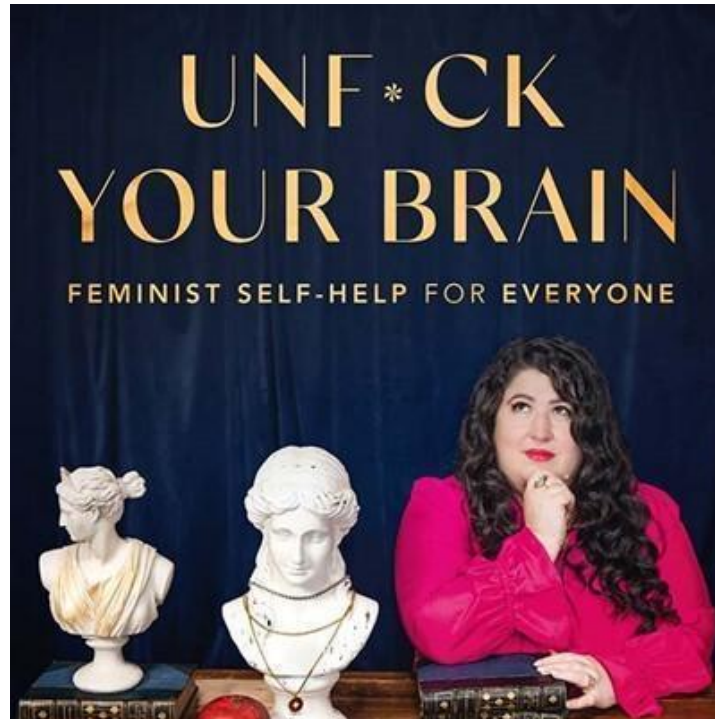


# UFYB 265: Conversations with My Partner Part 2: Daily Life and Q+A



## 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.

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Kara: Hello my chickens, this week we are continuing our conversation with the Gentleman Consort. Last week we talked about the development of our relationship, the places that we have grown and the work we've had to do, thought work and otherwise in our relationship. And today we're going to be talking about some of the more unusual, although PG 13 aspects of our relationship and some questions that we got about them, our living arrangements, our financial arrangements, stuff like that. So without further ado we will dive right back in and I hope you find it educational.

Kara: Okay.

Gentleman Consort: Next question.

Kara: Next question. So let's try to talk a little bit about some of these questions about kind of maybe more unusual parts of our relationship. We got asked a couple of questions about our living situations and money. So one of the questions we got was some variations of what was it like or why do you, or whatever. What is it like to sort of not be on a super traditional relationship escalator? And I think my listeners, I guess, know that I moved to South Slope to live close to you and the kids but not to move in with you and you didn't move in with me and we live separately.

So people want to know what were our discussions about that although that's actually also a funny story.

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Gentleman Consort: I mean mechanically I have two kids, and when you were moving you were definitely, were onboard with the relationship. But I think not onboard with the relationship in a, you know, it'd be great moving a five and eight year old into my house.

Kara: I don't think you would have said yes if I'd said I wanted to do that.

Gentleman Consort: No. One of the things we had discussed just before going on was that it is nice that we are both in places in our lives where we don't feel like we're sort of driven by any particular external forces. We're able to advance our relationship sort of based on what we want to do next. We're not looking for when we can have kids or when we have enough, or whether each of us has enough money to pay the rent and need to move in together. We don't have a lot of factors pushing us into any of our decisions.

Kara: I mean of course my response to that would be that it's not circumstances that ever really do that, it's people's thoughts about them. Because I think I can imagine a different woman in my position who was 40 years old and hadn't been married and wanted to get married and cohabitate and had those beliefs that that's what she should do. Who might have felt very differently about moving to be close to you but living separately, or not having a timeline or whatever.

So I mean I think we have certain circumstances that make that a little easier in terms of not having a biological clock or having enough money to be able to live separately. But ultimately there are people making much less money who also prefer to live separately even if they have to live in smaller places than they could live in together. Or there are people who want to have biological children but are not willing to make certain compromises in order to do so. So I think it's those circumstances, there's places you can

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do less or more thought work. Those circumstances get us out of having to do that thought work.

Gentleman Consort: Well, there's also, I mean we're talking about whether or not we are meshing with sort of traditional relationship escalation. And because we don't have that motivation doesn't mean that we're not sort of escalating our relationship. You moved from Harlem to South Slope. That's not a small move. You are now spending a lot more time with my kids. You were never somebody who had or wanted kids. We're actually moving at a fairly good pace. Our relationship is escalating. The question I guess is sort of presuming that the next obvious step somehow would be living together.

And I don't think that is necessarily an immediate step, or that wasn't a necessarily immediate for us but that doesn't mean our relationship isn't actively moving forward and that we're not sort of consciously making that happen.

Kara: Yeah, definitely. I do think we should normalize people being in committed relationships or even married. For us, should we get married or should we move in together are two totally separate conversations.

Gentleman Consort: And we didn't know how it was going to go. We didn't know how you, me and the kids were going to be. We knew how you and I were, we didn't know what it was going to be like. We didn't really know even what your sort of reaction was going to be to being sort of exposed to children.

Kara: I hadn't lived in a convent and never seen children before. But I think what I want people to take away from this is this idea that you have more autonomy in how you structure your relationships than most people take advantage of. And that yeah, society tells you that there's certain things that a 'serious relationship' look like or that you should even want a 'serious

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relationship' or whatever. But those aren't necessarily required. And you get to decide all parts of it. We could end up deciding to not get married or ever live together.

And we could end up deciding to get married but not live together. We could live together or none of that. And people don't take advantage of the flexibility that they could have because we have such deep socialization, especially women that our value and the way we prove we're good enough is to go up this relationship escalator and get to these different milestones.

And then of course a lot of people end up married and either getting divorced or living kind of separate lives while married because they maybe didn't really want, either it's not the right person but also maybe they just didn't want that kind of life. But they did it because that's what they're supposed to do.

Gentleman Consort: I mean I think ultimately all of the sort of steps that are presumed in traditional relationships are probably going to happen to us. We're probably going to make this happen. It just feels really freeing to be making those decisions because it feels like the next right thing for us to do instead of feeling like it is some sort of necessary.

Kara: I think this is also an interesting difference in what the constraints have felt like for us. For you in the past you felt more constrained by external circumstances, partly also not knowing about thought work and thoughts and feelings. And I think for me I have felt more constrained by the social conditioning and all of the work I had to do to decouple this thing. So for me it's like growth to be in a situation where I'm like, I don't feel like I need to get validation from doing those things.

So one of the things that makes this possible for us at the scale that we're at is that I make more money than you do. So we got a question that said,

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“To Kara, can you discuss being richer than your male partner and not having to dim your lights so he doesn’t feel emasculated?” The Gentleman Consort is basically like, “I reject the premise of that question.”

Gentleman Consort: Just, look, we live in Park Slope, Brooklyn.

Kara: We don’t even live in Park Slope, we live in South Slope.

Gentleman Consort: Our problem is not on the cultural pulse of the nation [inaudible].

Kara: Speak for yourself.

Gentleman Consort: I guess I’m not entirely clear why somebody would feel emasculated by having a partner who made more, it just seems like a baffling question to me.

Kara: Well, I feel like you, when we met, when we talked about this kind of early on, you did say that you had sort of had to take a minute with yourself when you found out how much money the business made or that I had. And think, okay, is this going to be a problem for me or not? So you did go through that.

Gentleman Consort: We were dating for a surprisingly long time before I had any sense that we were at different financial stations. I don’t know how it is I missed it going into your plush apartment.

Kara: It’s a little baffling that you didn’t figure that out based on apartment.

Gentleman Consort: Yeah, somehow I didn’t work that out.

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Kara: But I think because you had never looked for an apartment that cost more than a certain amount, it's like, you were just like, "This must just be a little bit more than my apartment. Cool." As opposed to, "No, this is a completely different class."

Gentleman Consort: Fourfold my apartment. Interesting.

Kara: But you did have to, I mean you told me that you did have to sort of sit down with yourself for a minute and decide if this was going to be a problem for you. Is that just not gender related kind of?

Gentleman Consort: I feel like I had to sit down and decide if it was an issue for me and it took me about 45 seconds. And I didn't really think of it in terms of a gender issue.

Kara: Okay, interesting. For you it was more like, is this going to be an issue because this has not been my lifestyle? This isn't kind of what I came from, it was more of that perspective?

Gentleman Consort: I have to say I'm not really even sure how to address it because it just seems like such a foreign idea. Why would I be upset that a partner was making more money than I am? It almost doesn't make sense to me.

Kara: Well, I think men are often socialized to believe that, like women are socialized to believe that their appearance is what their value is and men are socialized to believe that their jobs and making money is the man's thing and is where their value comes from.

Gentleman Consort: I went to law school and ended up working for the government.

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Kara: I mean I think what people can take away from this is we didn't sort of work through this as a big issue but just also that there are people out there who won't think it's a big issue. To some extent yes, every partnership has its things you have to work through. And if you're in a relationship with someone who has a lot of thoughts and feelings on a gendered basis, but who makes some money, it may be worth it to try to work through that in your relationship.

But if you're starting out single, just don't assume that you date heterosexual men, that they're all going to have a problem with it. Because I would say it took you about one trip to get used to staying in fancy hotels.

Gentleman Consort: Yeah. I didn't have a problem. I guess maybe this is [inaudible]. But the only place where it has struck me at all as sticky is I have a lot of sort of ego wrapped up in the idea that I can take care of my own kids. So anything where you're helping in any way with my family expenses took me a minute to get used to just because the idea that I can take care of my family myself is something that is so sort of ingrained I guess. But honestly, I don't think that was a gender issue. It wouldn't really have mattered where this mysterious theoretical money was coming from.

Kara: It didn't matter that the money was coming from a woman. But I do think it's gendered in that men are socialized to believe.

Gentleman Consort: That may be right, yeah, that may be. But that was the only place where I feel like I had really more than a couple of moments that I thought about it.

Kara: I think that's also a place where thought work is very helpful because I feel like I was able to be like, you totally can. It's just do we also want to do this other thing? It's how are we defining taking care of? It's like I could just not contribute and then we would just not be adding this element,



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whatever it is. And then it would just be like you never met me and it'd be fine and you would be taking care of them. Or do we want to add this thing that I can make? So I mean I think to me that's a perfect thought work thing because without defining what it means to 'take care of my family'.

You actually have no way of knowing whether you're doing it or not, or what would change it, or whatever. I feel like that was kind of what that conversation was like.

Gentleman Consort: Yeah. But don't dim your light, vacationing on your budget has been different than vacationing on my budget.

Kara: I feel like half of the time our conversation is like, I'm like, "I am a lot." And you're like, "You're not that much honey." And then half the time it's like, "You are a lot but I like a lot." And for everybody listening, don't worry, he's a lot too, just in different ways. But I do think that one of the things that I have struggled with as a coach and somebody who's very aware of people's thought processes is that it feels almost like I can either choose to see it in this sense of this is so great that we like, whatever our diversities are fit together so nicely.

Or I can see that as a bad thing. And I've just chosen to see it as a good thing. I'm just like, "There's no perfect human mind that doesn't have its own shit." And if you find somebody where yours pairs up nicely of course you can keep working on them. But you can just enjoy that that kind of works out nicely.

Gentleman Consort: Yeah, it's okay when things mesh.

Kara: It's okay when things mesh even if when you think about the reasons they mesh, you're like, "That's probably not ideal." Okay, what has it been

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like, it was a question for you that I thought would be interesting. What has it been like to witness my thought work play out in real time?

Gentleman Consort: We worked together for a while before I think you really sort of tried to explain how this works formally. I really would just sort of – I would be experiencing the result of it but didn't really understand the process by which you had gotten to the result. Because I think, obviously we had been together for months and months before the first time you showed me the model.

Kara: The model, that was over the summer, yeah. You didn't know what I did for three months.

Gentleman Consort: I was not clear what you did for a long time. Yeah, and it's not for lack of asking, I just honestly couldn't figure out what your answers meant.

Kara: It turns out weirdly that people who work for government agencies aren't always super up on – men who work for government agencies in their middle age aren't super up on the life coaching business on the internet.

Gentleman Consort: No, right. Well, and I think, yeah, I think I misunderstood as well. My first impression was that you just, you had a few clients as a life coach. I did not understand whatsoever the scope of it. And then I would mention your name to friends and I'd get halfway through the name and their eyes would light up because they were podcast listeners. And I suddenly started realizing that maybe I didn't have a full understanding of what you were up to. How is that 70% of the people I know, know exactly who you are?

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Kara: That is definitely an exaggeration. So what is it like? So do you feel like you see times or experiences where you sort of see me going through it?

Gentleman Consort: You frequently have to almost call my attention to it. You will explain how it is that the reaction that you're having is based on having done thought work. And explain what the feelings were and how you got to the place that you are. I don't intuitively detect it yet. I'm aware it's going on but I wouldn't be able to say, "This is something she's done thought work on. This is a thought work effect." I get it and I appreciate it. I happily get the end result of somebody who has sort of asserted herself in a way that seems to fit well with me.

But I don't know that I actually think to myself, well, this is the result of thought work and here's how. So it's sort of hard to answer the question.

Kara: That's fair. What do you think I need to do additional thought work on, I need to work on other than being more excited when you come home."

Gentleman Consort: Yeah, being excited when I come home, that's it. So you need to do thought work on how to accept enthusiastic affection. I haven't the faintest idea what to say about this. What do I think you need to do more thought work on. This feels like a very easy way for me to get in trouble.

Kara: Is that how our relationship works, you get in trouble when you tell the truth?

Gentleman Consort: Let's go on to, maybe I'll think of something.

Kara: I mean I will say that we didn't talk about this earlier in the, how have we grown in the relationship thing. I think we got distracted. But kind of four

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or five months into our relationship I started having a very intense emotional response to aspects of our relationship with intimacy. And I got a lot of support for that and went through a very long process of trying to sort out what was going on with me and why I was having those reactions. And I've talked about that on the podcast before. I think that was a big area of growth. And you definitely saw thought work happening then.

Gentleman Consort: That's something that we also both worked on together. And that's really where you sort of invited me in to thought work conceptually. So yeah, that was a big one.

Kara: Yeah. That's when I was like, "Just so you know, when things get hard, we get support. This is what's happening, we get coaches, we get people." Okay, well, the only questions that are left, very important questions, I don't know which we should do first. I feel like, let's ask the hard one first. How do you deal with the fact that I don't eat bratwurst? That was really a question someone submitted.

Gentleman Consort: This is another coming from South Slope, Brooklyn, kind of question. Everybody here has lunatic ideas about food. I dated somebody who wouldn't eat any animal that had eyes larger than a certain size, the arbitrary nature of the thing, people decide they are allergic to [inaudible].

Kara: It's so nice that you have just such a – what's the right word? Such a sort of rational and objective set of dietary preferences.

Gentleman Consort: Everyone else is crazy.

Kara: Okay. Well, then the last question.

Gentleman Consort: More bratwurst for me.

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Kara: More bratwurst, that's really, that's the silver lining, more bratwurst for him. Okay, then what's the last question, what do you love most about me? Then I'll answer what I love most about you.

Gentleman Consort: I had wanted a relationship that was more stable, had a better foundation and was built on more communication. I didn't know how to say that, and I didn't know how to get there and I didn't know what that would even necessarily look like when I got there. But running into Kara at exactly that time was an amazingly happy thing to have occurred. The honesty with which we are building our relationship is entirely new for me. And the openness with which we're building our relationship is entirely new for me. And the idea that everything is going to be talked about, somewhat like it or not.

Kara: You're here of your own freewill though. You have not been kidnapped.

Gentleman Consort: I have said over, and over, and over that every step along the way as I have sort of been developing this hurts and is miserable and makes me very unhappy and in the end makes me feel much better. And I'm going to continue to trust the system.

Kara: That's what he always says in the middle of every emotional conversation he's like, "I'm just trusting the system."

Gentleman Consort: I am trusting it keeps working out. It keeps turning out, the being honest about things and actually saying how you feel and dealing with it is better than pushing it down, ignoring it and just hoping that it will go away.

Kara: Because does it go away?

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Gentleman Consort: It does not.

Kara: It does not.

Gentleman Consort: I am trusting the system.

Kara: I mean I definitely felt like when we first met in our early relationship, to me this is not discounting your love for me or how great I am. But I do think I felt like one of the reasons that you fell pretty hard pretty fast was it was really you'd never experienced telling the truth and being accepted for it. I mean that's such an intimacy builder. And if anything's going to make you have strong positive feelings towards someone it's going to be risking something that feels vulnerable and hard, telling the truth about something and having somebody accept you and accept that.

Gentleman Consort: It took me a long time to trust that.

Kara: Yeah, for sure.

Gentleman Consort: That you would be clearly fishing for me to say what my real feeling was. And I was looking for every reason not to, convinced that somehow it was going to end up going badly.

Kara: And I think we still work on that and we probably still will. You're pretty good now at telling me the big things. I think you still swallow a lot of your daily frustrations with me.

Gentleman Consort: Well, and then there were some other things of ours that meshed really well but we can save that for an afterhours podcast.

Kara: Alright. Well, I will say my favorite thing, there's so many of them but here's how I'll answer this actually because there's what I love about you as

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a person which is just that I think you are so funny and so smart. And I mean this is the only relationship I've ever been in where I think we're both pretty equally funny. Usually I'm the funnier one. But you are actually very funny.

Gentleman Consort: I'm just letting it go.

Kara: Well, how is that a negative?

Gentleman Consort: No, it's not a negative. Alright, I just feel awkward, okay.

Kara: Okay. So you are really smart and funny. And we didn't even answer this question, we skipped it accidentally. What is it like to date a parent? But one of my favorite things about you is just that you're such a caretaker of the people around you. And you want everyone to be happy. And you want to take care of everyone and any trait that can veer too far in one direction sometimes. But I think for me having a very nurturing kind of primary male presence in my life has been a really beautiful experience.

I asked you yesterday what you felt was the most important thing in a relationship because this is what I do to him when we're driving is we ask questions like this. And he said, "That you like each other. That you actually want, beyond loving each other, that you enjoy each other and want to be around each other." Which I do think is very important.

But I think for me one of my favorite things about you ties into what I think is the most important thing in a relationship which is I almost hesitate to say because I don't believe that people should always work at a relationship that isn't working. People should break up if their relationship isn't serving them. So it's not that I think everybody should always work at something. But at the same time I think what sets apart relationships that work from

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ones that don't is that both people really want them to work, I mean I think both people.

But you can have an amazing chemistry, and compatibility, and all these things, and if you're not really committed to the project or the relationship it will still fall apart. And conversely you can have some pretty big differences certainly like we started out with at least. And if you want to make it work, I think maybe the difference is it's not a good idea to want to make it work in a way that's like, well, I don't actually really like this person or the relationship but just relationships should stay together. That's not helpful.

If the relationship aligns with your values, aligns with your priorities, the person is the kind of person that you want to be with and you have that enjoyment, to me the thing that makes a relationship work is that both people want it to work more than they want to be right or make the other person the bad guy or whatever. And I think that's something that you really model very beautifully. I think I felt from the beginning that you were really committed to this relationship, just the project of building something together and you like projects.

Gentleman Consort: I think one of my first impressions that this might be that we were well suited. We took a vacation to Quebec City that involved a really long drive through pretty bad weather. And the trip was amazing. Montreal was amazing. Quebec City was amazing. We had a great time but afterwards when I thought about the vacation one of the things that is my best memory from that vacation was essentially just being stuck in a car with you for eight hours and just talking about anything that came up.

We had actually plowed through a couple of fairly emotional topics like we almost always do when we're in a car. But that was really, that was one of my earliest senses that this might really be something that sticks, that spending more time with you and I just loved being with you.



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Kara: Yeah, we had a real, the Gentleman Consort had to drive through a blinding rain storm in Quebec where all the signs are in French. And there was road construction at night and I was like, “Now, is when we’re going to talk about what it would look like with finances down the line, about money.” But you were always very patient with me. Alright, my chickens, there you go, that’s the story. We also got a million questions about how we navigate conflict and fighting. And maybe we’ll talk about those another time because this is already an hour long.

So I hope you’ve enjoyed this kind of peek behind the scenes and thank you for coming on, Gentleman Consort. And I don’t usually say those words out loud. I just type them on social media so it sounds funny to say it out loud. Bye everybody.

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