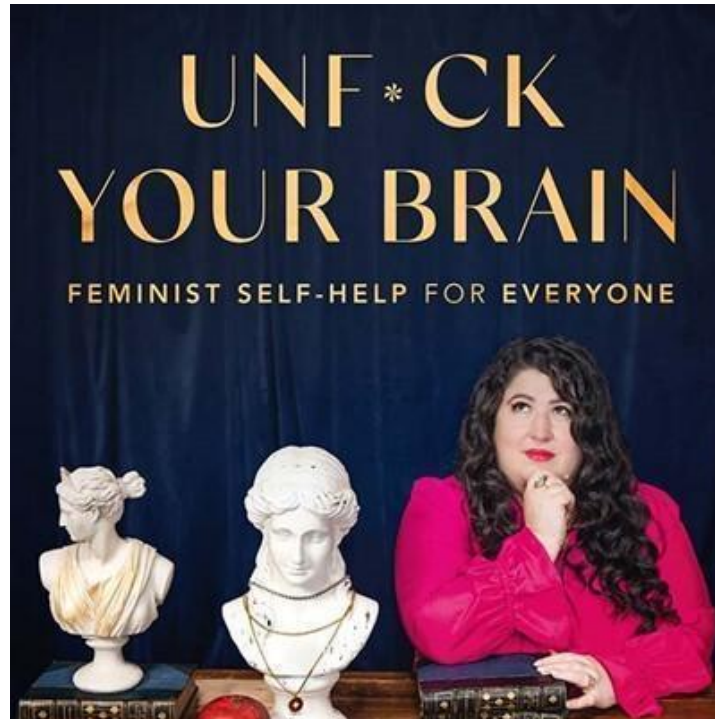


UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

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 friends, my chickens, my students, my listeners, my clients, all of you, everybody listening. So I do quite a few interviews on other people's podcasts, of course. And normally they're fine and you can listen to them if you happen to listen to those other podcasts. But once in a while I do one that I just think is so valuable and such a kind of addition to what I normally talk about, that I really want to share it with you all. Often when I go on another podcast, they don't know about thought work and I'm just kind of going over the basics and you all know the basics.

But sometimes I have a conversation like I had on the *Hack Your Time* podcast with my friend and former coach, Vikki, and is such a good, deep conversation that takes our concepts to another level with a topic that I haven't explored in that way on this podcast. And so then I really want to share it with you. So that's what this episode is, it's a conversation I had on the *Hack Your Time* podcast and.

We get really deep into thought patterns around time and time usage and productivity and the industrial revolution and capitalism and patriarchy, and how we think about time. And how that changes when we are a solopreneur or an employee or an employer or a business owner or just a person in the world outside of those identities. So just a really rich, juicy conversation.

I'm really excited for all of you to hear it because 'time management' is something we all need to think about one way or the other, how we're using our time, how to do that intentionally. What kinds of thoughts and values

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

are shaping that, that we may not even be aware of? So I can't wait for you to hear this conversation. I think it is so valuable and I'm so glad that Vikki was willing for me to share it here as well.

Vikki: Hello, lovely people. I am so excited today. I have lined up an absolute treat for you, Kara Loewentheil is on the podcast. And she is a feminist coach, but more than that, I think one of the pioneers in feminist coaching. She is definitely a role model of mine and also a former client as I was lucky enough to work with her one-on-one, which don't email and ask if I do that. I don't, very rare occasions like the DM from Kara. And also actually want me to do some workshops for your team as well. And I coached someone on your team, which we can chat a bit about as well. So welcome, hi.

Kara: Thank you. I'm going to actually require everyone to refer to me as an absolute treat from now on. I'm going to tell my partner, that's how I'd like to be addressed.

Vikki: I think so. I think so, yeah. Amazing. So I thought we'd kick off actually maybe and speak with some of the themes that we both see and experience around time and women before we delve into our experience together. And so I'd love to start by asking you, obviously my listeners know what I speak about all the time. But in fact, I even remember you created a post on Facebook that was what are some of the things that people try and tell women how to do?

And I commented time and then you broke it down, "Yes, but how to spend their work time, how to spend their mornings, how to show up in a relationship, how to show up in relationships with siblings and kids and parents and all of this stuff. And so I think that's really interesting as well.

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

It's an area of our lives, where as women, other people have a lot of opinions about how we should be spending it.

Kara: Yeah. So for people who aren't familiar with me, I'm the host of the *UnF*ck Your Brain* podcast. And I teach sort of women how to become aware of how society has impacted their thinking and how to change that thinking. So, if you're listening to this podcast, you listen to a lot of mindset and thought work coaching in general. And my work is really about adding the lens of gender based socialization to that coaching conversation, not just gender based.

I'm an intersectional feminist coach so I also talk about the impacts of white supremacy on your minds, on your thought process of fat phobia, of ableism, of all the different kind of oppressive structures we live in. And so I think when it comes to time, there's certain areas where I think women are getting most of the socialization. And then there's some areas where I think we're everybody's getting some bad capitalist socialization and then women and other marginalized people are getting specific additional scoops, like it's another scoop of ice cream, but it's not ice cream because it's not delicious. Another scoop of terribleness on top of that.

So we're all getting socialized around how we should be spending our time and the morality, the moral value that's associated and kind of layered on different ways of spending your time and what you're supposed to doing with your time. Then women are getting socialized particularly harder on this. And I think that's because one of the kind of core principles of what I teach is that women are socialized to believe that their value lies essentially in being of service to other people and it's a utilitarian value.

They're not socialized to believe they have value just for existing. It's what do you do with your body or your emotions or your brain for other people? And so obviously that is going to really impact how you think about time

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

and how you spend your time. If your unconscious core belief is that you're only allowed to exist if you are doing something for somebody else.

Vikki: Right. We are here to serve others and therefore when we are not serving others, we are doing something wrong, which is why I think so much guilt comes in I think, I mean, I can tell you from coaching my own clients that time guilt is so prevalent and it's not exclusive. It's not, I feel guilty if I'm working that I'm away from my kids. I also feel guilty with my kids that I'm away from working.

Kara: Yeah, a double bind, whatever you're doing, you feel like you should be doing that, but also something else at the same time. So you can never be present with wherever you are.

Vikki: Right, exactly. And I think that lack of ability to be present is also something that we're like, "Well, that's my fault I can't be present."

Kara: If I just meditate and have the perfect morning routine, then I would be present all day long.

Vikki: Right. And my new favorite one that I've seen come up so much recently on social media is the answer to 99.99% of your problems is actually just waking up an hour earlier. What do you think about that?

Kara: Well, I mean, I have against my own will become a morning person lately and it is helpful, but I don't think it's the answer to structural sexism and racism.

Vikki: Yes, thank you. Thanks for clarifying that. I also think one of the fundamental issues around time for women and marginalized people is we were just never considered when the existing time culture was created. We weren't considered when the existing structures around how we were

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

created. There's just zero consideration for us in that arena. And as women are the largest growth area in terms of the workforce. How we've been taught to do that is to push forward and be willing to work twice as hard as anyone else.

And obviously the response of that, I think the burnout is not just a result of working longer and harder and pushing ourselves and the stress, but really working in a way that's not at all in tune with how we should work, we're disconnected from ourselves.

Kara: Yeah, I mean the sort of nine to five white collar worker workday was designed for heterosexual men who was married and had a wife at home who was taking care of everything else in his life. So to try to do that and then do everything else in your life as well. It's not how it was designed. I mean, I think the way that time and work were designed across genders for blue collar workers and in the factories and the industrial revolution was also not compatible.

I mean people used to live in dormitories and go to the factory 12 hours a day and go home, which we're not trying to emulate that. But even there it was not designed for what we're all trying to do, which is somehow work an eight to ten hour day and also run our own household and take care of kids and have hobbies and have friends and have a million other things. So I mean, I think for me it's very hard to talk about the problems with time without talking about capitalism and the late stage capitalism that we're in.

But that also is complicated by the fact that most people who haven't studied [inaudible] conflate things. So when we talk about capitalism here, we're not talking about barter or basic commerce, which every society has had since the beginning of time because you have too many eggs and I don't have a blanket and we need to trade. Even having currency, it's not

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

just barter, having a basic currency that is sort of commerce, that's not the same as capitalism, which is about scale and exploitation of labor.

And so capitalism is inherently ever expanding. A barter system or even a basic commerce system can just stay the way it is and just exist in perpetuity. It doesn't really have to get bigger or smaller or change, but capitalism the way it's designed is that you always have to keep growing and maximizing profits. And so there's more and more pressure on time and resources. And I think we are all caught up in that and then in America in particular, and this is interesting because you and I have different kind of backgrounds.

But in America, it gets very hooked up with kind of the puritan origins of a lot of our culture and our social discourse, which is that working is virtuous and laziness is sin and idleness. The devil finds work for idle hands, all of this. And I grew up Jewish so I was a little exempted from this. But the Jewish immigrant mentality in New York is not chill either. There's a lot of a lot of hard work pressure there too. I've now made 17 points to this comment.

But I think that one of the things that I find most powerful about coaching around these issues is that people have never questioned the idea that lazy exists and is bad, or that being productive is not inherently good. People don't even see that level of moralism that's baked in.

Vikki: Yes, I actually spoke about this once somewhere about how the definition of lazy actually means choosing not to do something. So why is that bad, [crosstalk] something.

Kara: Right. And also whenever you do, do one thing you're choosing not to do another thing.

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

Vikki: 100%.

Kara: So I think people's definition of lazy is rest. It's just if I am not actively doing a thing and resting doesn't count, then I'm being lazy. And everybody will say they believe it's important to rest but then just in any specific instance of it, they are uncomfortable doing it. People are like, "Yeah, I'm willing to feel all my negative emotions." And then with any specific emotion, you're coaching them, they're like, "No, I don't want to feel this one." I meant theoretically, I'd be willing to feel some other negative emotion

So we're all like, "Yeah, theoretically, I think rest is important for other people. And so at some point I should rest, but I certainly can't rest now because I have too much to do and it would be lazy and it's not productive. There's a meme going around right now that's like, "Ah, it's so wonderful to be here relaxing. Also me, I wonder if I could relax more productively." And that's funny [crosstalk] that thought.

Vikki: Yes, it's a huge thing. And it's funny because I remember, my mom was saying a few weeks ago. I said, "How was your day?" And she goes, "It's good, I got a lot done."

Kara: Of course, yes.

Vikki: Right. And it's just thinking of this as I had a bad day, I didn't get anything done?

Kara: Yes, my partner is like that. I mean, I spend so much time with coaches, then you start spending a lot of time with somebody who comes to you, now he's been coached, comes to you fresh and was like, "Yeah, I feel really guilty, I didn't get enough done today." And I was like, "Oh, my

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

God, I forgot that that's the way people are running their lives, we've got to talk about this.”

Vikki: Yeah. And even I mean, the idea that's come up recently in my coaching community is this guilt around doing nothing. And one of the things we've been speaking about is it's literally impossible to do nothing, even as you sit still, lie still, eyes shut, your body is literally working to keep you alive.

Kara: I just think that guilt is such a fascinating thing. Feeling unproductive, I'm like, “Okay, you didn't produce something, you feel unproductive, fine.” Guilt is by not doing a work task I have morally sinned. That's what guilt is, I have committed a moral wrong. I have done something that is immoral by not doing this work task. You didn't send an email, Janet. You didn't murder someone. And I'm not making light of that concern. We all have that thought process. But it's just interesting to break it down. Really ask yourself, what does that mean?

I'm saying that not finishing that report by Thursday at eight and doing it Friday at noon instead was immoral of me. I violated a moral precept. What? The 10 commandments, I mean, I'm not particularly religious, it's not the 10 commandments are the be all, end all. But one of the 10 commandments wasn't, you must finish your work projects on time. Why is that? Don't kill. Don't steal.

Vikki: Do not respond to email.

Kara: Yeah, Don't kill. Don't steal. And don't ever have a day you take a nap. These are not on the same level.

Vikki: Yes, absolutely. And one of the things that I think we've been programmed to think, to be producers or consumers and when we're not

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

either of those things. Because for example, I think it's fine in terms of our society to be consuming. It's okay to be consuming, whether that's 17 videos on YouTube or 17 pairs of shoes online.

Kara: Right. You can go to the movies because you're going to spend money on a ticket and popcorn or you can go play golf because you have to buy a bunch of stuff to do that and then be at the country club. but just sitting on your couch, that's lazy.

Vikki: Yes, and that's the problem because that, so if you think about who would benefit most from that narrative?

Kara: Right. What does capitalism need? Consumers and producers. Those are the two identities you can have and all of us are both of them at different times. And the way that rest gets commodified in the sense that relaxation gets associated with things that cost money. If you go on a vacation and pay for a hotel and pay for restaurants, you need to do a leisure activity where you have to buy a bunch of things to do it. You're right, you always have to be, either you have to be performing production or consumption all the time.

Vikki: Yes. And that point that Kara's just made is actually huge because I'm seeing this more and more and even if it's consuming social media or blogs or how to guides or whatever. So it's money, but just consuming information that other people can make money from. So I think that's huge.

Kara: When you're scrolling on social media, you actually are, that's a funny way of thinking about it because people feel guilty about that. You actually are producing. You're producing data for Facebook and Instagram to mine and sell ads on. So you can think about it that way, if you'd feel better about it.

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

Vikki: Yeah, exactly. And what's interesting as we're speaking is I'm thinking is I've never put this together before but speaking to you it's so clear. My background was in economics. So, of course I've ended up in the time arena. It's so funny how you've brought it to me today?

Kara: Well, because it's such a different resource. Money is a resource that you can, it's more flexible and time is really we have this amount unless it turns out that cryogenics works, this is it. So how are we going to spend it? How are we going to create? It's a different thing.

Vikki: Yeah, totally. And then another thing I wanted to speak to you about is because you have a company. So it's interesting for us to speak about for women and for individuals and also for business owners and managers, how is it managing that when...

Kara: In terms of my time or how I think about time management for my employees?

Vikki: Your employees, how you think about it?

Kara: I mean, I think this is a complicated area primarily because especially as you're scaling your business, you kind of can't be everywhere and have your eyes everywhere. And I feel conflicted around this. And that's sort of trying to function in one kind of world when you're trying to operate a different way. But then you also, not everybody who works for you necessarily. First of all, not everybody who works for you is going to operate the same way you do.

I am somebody who is a sprinter, gets a lot done in a short period of time. Some people are not. Some people are marathon walkers. Some people really need structure and accountability to get their work done. And so it would be nice to be like, "Well, it's utopia. I just, I don't know what they're

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

doing, they just create the results and I don't care where and when. And I don't know anything about it.”

But I recently had an experience with somebody on my team where I had relaxed my sort of requirement for employees at a certain level to basically for me to know what they were doing all the time. And it really turned out that we had redundancy on the team and there shouldn't have been two jobs. So that was the downside of that. So I don't think it's an easy answer. I would like to be able to say, yeah, that we have, that because I'm a full convert to the time hacker method. We have no structure and people just have job responsibilities and they do them in the middle of the night from Hawaii and it's fine.

You're also in a business, when people are on a team, they have to be able to communicate with each other at certain times. We had a great application for a job recently from somebody who lived in New Zealand. And I just was like, “You're not going to be awake when the rest of the team is awake.” And there might be some, yeah, if you were just a graphic designer who just sent things in, got feedback. Maybe that would work. But for this position on the team, you need to be able to come to meetings. You run into, I think, more complicated areas.

But I think, for me, the thing I find the most helpful is really when it comes to looking at what my employees are doing and coaching them and being able to be like, “Okay, why is this taking so much time? You must have some thoughts happening. Let's talk about what are your thoughts here? Why is it six hours for this half hour task? It's not because you're lazy or stupid. It's because you have some thought about how you're doing it or what you're supposed to do or how long it's supposed to take.” And so I think all of that coaching as an employer is really important.

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

So you do have to clean up your own stuff, but I think you also have to be realistic about different jobs are going to operate in different ways and different. I mean you and I have talked about simple, I don't know, if you're a bus driver, well, you've really got to drive that route. The kids have got to be picked up from school at a certain time and dropped off. So we can't just be drive as fast as you can and do the route as short as you can and have more time off. You have to be kind of realistic about how the time has to work for different jobs and what different employee work styles need.

And I think so much of business advice is just trying, people are like, "I don't want to have to use my discernment and figure out a bunch of different things. I just want one rule to apply." And there generally isn't one.

Vikki: Yeah, and I think you're exactly right. I think sometimes the issue is companies looking to solve the time issues that arise, bring in a trainer who teaches time boxing. And that doesn't work for everyone and it's not a one-size-fits-all. It really is about deciding as the manager, as the head, what the priorities are for the different roles and communicating that as you're recruiting.

Kara: It's very hard as an entrepreneur because usually if you have created the company, you have a very different work style than the kind of people who want to work in a company. You did this to yourself because you didn't want to work in a company. And then you're hiring people who do want to work in a company. So you have a very different set, it's not a one-size-fits-all. And learning how to think in those two different ways is challenging.

Vikki: Yeah. And also I was speaking to a CEO recently and he was saying he thinks a lot of his success is one of the things we talk about in Time Hacking is showing up with fear. And not looking to feel amazing about everything all the time. But that's very much a founder CEO, personality

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

trait and not necessarily for employees. And understanding that and understanding that our priorities are different, how we think is different and how we [inaudible] different, is huge. So I love that you shared that.

Kara: Yeah. Which is so important, I need somebody on my team who loves processes because I do not love processes. I mean, I'll follow it once we have it, but I don't want to make it up.

Vikki: I just hired a Director of Operations and I'm like, This is do delicious."

Kara: Oh, my God, it's so good. You get a good operations person and they're like, "Here's the spreadsheet that I've laid out perfectly for you. And here's how it'll work." And you're just like, "I'm just going to go down this yellow brick road. This is amazing."

Vikki: Yes. And I think it's hard actually because I know a lot of people listening to this probably are also solopreneurs or coaches or whatever. And I think it's also hard when you're building the business as a one person or maybe even supported by a VA. It's really hard because there are so many things you are doing that are not in your skill set.

Kara: Yeah. You're the Head of Customer Service and the Head of Marketing and the Head of Vision. I mean, even now I have 12 employees and I still do at least three jobs in the business.

Vikki: Yes, right. And I think and probably even for you now, but for that person, what is it that you are letting take longer? Or what is it that you are making take longer because of your thoughts about it versus it's actually just a five minute job or a 10 minute job.

Kara: Right. I mean, I couldn't do three jobs if I wasn't able to do things faster than most people are able or most people believe they can really or if

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

I wasn't comfortable with doing one draft and being like, "Okay, that's it. That's what we got." So that perfectionism, I mean, I came from being a lawyer and I've coached a lot of lawyers and even coached a lot of lawyers to turn into entrepreneurs. And it's a big transition because as a lawyer, your training is basically if you make a mistake, it's malpractice. Everything has to be perfect.

And if there are mistakes not only do you lose a case, but you can be sued. And so to go from that to being an entrepreneur where you're like, "I don't know, it looks basically okay", out the door is a really different mindset. And it takes a while to shift through that, I think. And so going from the habit of quadruple checking everything and having four pairs of eyes on everything until being an entrepreneur is it's a big mind fuck.

Vikki: It really is. And a few of the things that you brought up, a few of the things that came up when we were coaching together, we mentioned sprinting and I think a lot of people when I first speak about it, they're like, "The Pomodoro method", which I think is 25 minutes on, five minutes off.

Kara: It's like, yeah, that, but only three times and then you're done for the day is really more.

Vikki: Yeah, it's that except for switch the 25 and five minutes ratio. So you're resting a lot more than you are performing. And I think that's it, if you want to perform at a higher level, rest is part of that.

Kara: I think rest is part of that. I also do believe pretty strongly in the premise that it's not the action that burns you out, it's the thoughts and feelings behind it, because you can be working on something that you love and feel amazing and work 12 hours and not be upset at all. And you can spend 90 minutes on something that you have terrible thoughts about and

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

at the end you're so burnt out you don't do anything else for three days. So I think it's not the work that burns us out.

I mean, to an extent obviously, my sister was a medical resident. That is an insane schedule. People are not sleeping for three days. That is biologically problematic. But for a lot of us it is that, what is your thought and feeling behind it and what is the kind of energy experience you're creating when you're working? But yeah, I mean, you and I worked a lot on coming to terms with the fact that I am more of a sprinter.

And I mean that I had known about myself, but I still had a lot of, because I think our productivity and worth are so tied up together, I mean my real problem was not that I wasn't willing to admit I was a sprinter, but that I had a lot of thoughts about how I needed to be working the exact same number of hours as my employees. Which is also hilarious because there are weeks that I work way more than them. And then there's weeks I work way less. They don't work on the weekends. I often work on the weekends.

And sometimes that's because I'm working seven days in a row for that week or sometimes it's because I took Wednesday off or whatever. But I think that for me was, especially coming from a social justice background, I think that was challenging for me. And the work we did on that helped a lot. And then going through this, I've been going through the entrepreneurial organization process, EOS, which is just a certain way of running your business.

But doing our kind of org chart the way that they suggested, which really lets you see what each role is responsible for and being like, "Oh, I'm actually the CEO. I'm also the Director of Sales and Marketing." I'm also a copywriter weirdly still. And I'm also doing the kind of strategic vision for my main program still. And some of this work, I'm now hiring to fill, but sort of seeing all that and being like, "Okay, so maybe my thoughts that I'm lazy

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

are not accurate. That might be wrong.” But it took me 10 years to work on that sort of laziness programming.

Vikki: Yeah. I think it's such a deconditioning and deep learning and it still shows up for me. Even this week I had some sad new and I was like, “Okay, well, it's Monday, my friend's visiting, so I'm going to be with her.” And then I worked Tuesday. Wednesday, Thursday and so I'll deal with it Friday. And then by Thursday at 5:00pm I was on with my coach and I was just like, “My brain is frazzled, my body is fried. I'm obviously going to close my whole business. I can't do this.”

Kara: Whenever you go straight to like, “Well, that was a good run. Time to wrap it up.” You're like, “I might not be thinking clearly right now.”

Vikki: And I share that with everyone listening because I do think sometimes, I call it perfectionist brain sneaks in and goes like, “And then I will get to a place where I never confront this laziness method.” Versus or this fear of taking time off or this idea that work is more important than I am. And it's going to creep in, in different ways. And your brain is going to very cleverly justify it. And sometimes you won't realize till right at the end, like me this week and that's also okay. We don't have to get to this place of I'm always on it. I'm always clear. I'm always resting [crosstalk].

Kara: With socialization you can't get rid of all your socialization. That also teaches you not to pee in the street. We're going to keep a lot of what society has taught us. We're just trying to undo the most obvious damaging ones.

Vikki: [Crosstalk].

Kara: Yeah, listen, you can if you want. I live in New York. I see people pee in the street all the time. But in general it seems communicable diseases

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

went down when we stopped using the street as a toilet. So I think that's a good thing. I think it's also learning to work with your, I hate being this person, but I have to say it, that I started, I don't have any kind of diagnosis and don't self-diagnose myself. But it's always been clear to me I've got some kind of inconsistent dopamine regulation happening.

And I started, I hate so much that this works so well, taking cold showers in the morning. And I actually have really noticed, I'm not a whole different person but the amount of times that I need to sit down and do something and my brain just goes, "Peace out, I'm out." You figure this out. I don't know, I'm on vacation, never mind has really gone down. I mean, I think the way this relates is (a) obviously not everything is thought work.

But also (b) the way that the sort of toxic productivity capitalism programming impacts us is that it takes one specific type. I have actually met one person in my life who could just go into the office at nine, start typing away, type away straight till five and then go home. There was a guy that I was a fellow with at the Center for Reproductive Rights 15 years ago. If he's listening to this, he'll recognize himself. And that's the only person I've ever met who could do that.

But most of our beliefs about what we should be able to do are based on that, which most people, and especially if you're an entrepreneur, that's probably not you. That's probably not how your brain works or you wouldn't be attracted to this kind of job and lifestyle. So I think that we do have different types of brains, our brains work different ways. And some of it is mindset work. Some of it may be other techniques or other tools you need.

But all of that is easier if you are not believing, well, this is the way it's supposed to be. And I'm over here and my goal is to get closer to the way I'm supposed to be. You have this default idea and then you're trying to get to be like that as opposed to, well, what if there's 10,000 ways to be and do

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

this? Where am I in the big scatter graph of how people handle their time and their work?

Vikki: Yes, absolutely. One of the things that often, when people first join Time Hackers they say, "I'm here to make my perfect plan and follow it. Where's the video on the plan?" And I'm like, "Welcome to where we don't teach planning." And they're like, "What?" They freak out.

Kara: Right. I've finally got the plan, yeah.

Vikki: Yeah. They're like, "This is going to be the plan. You're going to tell me how to plan or how to work or how to operate or how to use my time." And I'm like, "That's not what we do here. Has that ever worked for you before?" And I think that's it.

Kara: But it's like diets, people always want the diet that's finally going to work. Just like they always want the planning or the time management system that's finally going to force their human organic matter to be a robot.

Vikki: 100%, I always speak about the time industry following the diet industry. There's 10,000 plans and none of them work. They just work for a day and then they're unsustainable and then you get to the next one and the next one and you end up in more chaos and getting less done, further away.

Kara: Right. You're feeling worse about yourself, blaming yourself for the failure and then let me just try the 45th one and maybe that'll work.

Vikki: And this one's definitely going to work. This one's the one. And then, well, there's something wrong with me. And then I'm going to retreat and hide away and just shame myself and maybe not go for my goals. And not

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

go for what I want because clearly I'm the problem, because this person said that following this three-step morning [crosstalk].

Kara: Just get the little tomato timer, I'm just going to, everything will be fine.

Vikki: I think about all, a big thing that I've been speaking about recently as I'm doing more of the B2B coaching is time tracking. And this idea that time tracking is the answer to remote work. And it's a tool, but also it's not a tool. If your people are regularly time tracking, that is time they are spending not doing the work. And what do you do with that plan? Do you use it to berate them? It's kind of like the stick method of we're watching you, so you better not fuck up. And then what people end up doing is lying in it, misusing it.

Getting to the end of the day and you're like, "Oh, shit, I can't even remember what I did." And just it promotes disloyalty and essentially a lying culture versus, hey, and it sounds like you do this, of course. But hey, there's a reason you're not getting things done and let's solve for that.

Kara: Right. Yeah, I mean, we do use the sort of Monday hour one hour done sort of tech, which to me the big value of planning on a calendar, what you're going to do when is just information. A lot of people just don't have any kind of system. I watch people where it's just like what are you doing? And they're like, "I don't know. I did write a to-do list yesterday but I don't know where I left it. And then I think, well, my email has 37,000 emails in there literally. So I guess I'll look in my email and see what I'm supposed to be doing." It's just total chaos.

And I think people like us don't really understand how many people are operating that way because that's not how my brain works and I am very organized. But I have my partner, I have friends. The amount of times I look at somebody's phone and it's 37,000 unread emails, 146 unread texts, no

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

system. And so I think for me it's not time tracking, it's time planning. But one of the ways it's helpful for me as a boss, a lot of us have unrealistic expectations of what other people can do with their time.

Both because when we did everything we weren't doing it at the scale that these people are. So in our mind it's, well, I used to do the customer service and do the sales calls. And yeah, because you had 12 one-to-one clients and now you have a membership of 3500 people. So the customer service person is dealing with 3500 people, not 12. For me it's actually been, I think people think of it as, well, it's for your benefit and looking your employees. But it actually is very beneficial to them because I can see these people are doing a full-time job. This is what they're doing all the time.

As you grow you have less insight into what's happening on the ground. And I do think a lot of the conflicts that I see entrepreneurs having with their employees when we're at this stage of you have three, five, 10, maybe 20 employees is not knowing what they're doing really day-to-day. And then thinking that they should be able to do more and not being realistic. And this way, when my team comes back to me and is like, "Well, you want this thing, but it's not realistic." They can be like, "Look, this is what we're doing. This is what's on the calendar. So where do you want us to do it?"

Whereas before it was they say, they can't do it. And I'm like, "I'm sure you have time. You can find some time."

Vikki: It's going to take a little while.

Kara: Yeah, just put it in a crack somewhere because as an entrepreneur that's how we are. We're like, "Okay, well, I'll just do it on Saturday or I'll just squeeze this in. So I think like any system, I mean, like any system, what are the thoughts driving it? Like any action, there are people who will give

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

their employees complete say of how to spend their time on everything because they don't want to supervise. And that doesn't end up good for the organization either when you're just like, Oh God, I don't want to think about it. You just do whatever. Let's hope this works out.”

So I think like anything it's what's the thought and feeling driving your decision is going to. Now, if you don't trust your employees and that's going to come out whatever system you're using or no system and vice versa.

Vikki: Yeah, I think that's it completely. Is there trust driving it? It's like any relationship, what's driving that relationship and what's driving the decisions that you make behind it?

Kara: Right. If you're texting your partner, when are you home because you're excited to see them and they know that's why, it comes across and it has a very different result than if you're tracking their movements because you don't trust them and they know that's why you're texting them.

Vikki: Right. That's a great example. Also one of the things that you spoke about just now was emails and I do want to speak about it because I know that you also operate on very low inboxes. I literally, all of my inboxes are clean, but I was I was a 10,000 email person and I do, I'll be honest, I do still have a spam account for when I sign up for things that I don't really want to hear from. They just go straight there, that's part of it.

Kara: I even cleaned that one out. I understand I'm not normal.

Vikki: Really? And have you always been like that or that's a skill you developed?

Kara: That's a good question, I mean I grew up before email was very popular, I am 40. So we didn't really start using email regularly, probably till

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

college. I mean we had a computer when I was in middle school, in high school. But you still, you called your friends on the phones when you were 14, 15, 16 still. No, I think I've always been like that. I mean I did read, when I was clerking a friend of mine introduced me to David Allen and the *Get it Done Method*. And a lot of it didn't work for me.

Part of my interest in coaching was me being like, “Okay, but this assumes that you have basically no procrastination avoidance or emotional drama about your work. So what human is this for?” If you have none of those things then you don't even need a system, you would just do it. So that part, for those people who don't know David, his old system, I don't know what he teaches now because things have changed so much. But this was back when people had fax machines and you didn't have a computer on your phone. You know you didn't have a phone in your pocket all the time.

And his system was, part of it, the part that I thought didn't make any sense if you were a human was well, you just have your priority list and you just do the things whenever you're at the right context for them. You're at your phone, you're at your computer, whatever. That part didn't work. But what really resonated with me from his work is that when your email inbox is full you are using up so much brain power to constantly be scanning it and try to see what's in there and look.

That you are sort of forcing yourself to make decisions over and over and over. And that that's a huge waste of your time and your mental energy. That is basically because you don't process it into tasks, instead you are using processing power every single time you go in there. And being like, “Okay, what's in here? Oh, yeah, there's the email from my lawyer that I never emailed.” Now, I'm thinking about whether I signed the will documents yet. Oh, there's the email from the tire place. There's the email from my...

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

So that was really powerful for me. And I think that's when I really started being like a, I'm not fully, I used to be more fully zero inbox. As my life has got more complicated now there's probably often three or four hanging out in there I really haven't dealt, which I need to. Part of that has just been integrating now that I have a bigger team e. What system we use in the team and then I've got my personal. I'm no Rachel Hart, she was the perfect, truly the most organized person I've ever met, the *Take a Break* podcast host.

But I think that was very powerful for me because I could just really see it. I can look at my email and like, "Oh yeah, he's right. I can feel my brain doing this right now." And I can see how that's so inefficient.

Vikki: Yes, And I think the same way to-do lists, it's the exact same thing like you can write it all down but every time you look at it, you have so many decisions. And if you have something on there that you don't really want to do, great, there's everything else that you can do instead.

Kara: Well, right, that's why I was like that part of the system doesn't make any sense. So what I teach in *The Clutch* is a combination of his system, the calendaring system, but with a healthy dose of this is not a thing to use to beat yourself up. So the point of the system is not to use it to police and berate yourself. And if it doesn't work for you, mess around with it. When I first started teaching this, even before I worked with you I already was teaching, put a bunch of buffer blocks on there, move things around.

I used to work with first year legal associates who literally didn't know what their job was going to be the next day because their whole job was to jump to whenever a partner needed some. And so having like a flex for me, it's really flexible structure, here's the general principles that I recommend, which is don't use your email inbox as your to-do list.

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

These are things that will drain your brain no matter who you are, because they're just inefficient, like leaving your fridge open, whatever you're eating. It doesn't matter, things are not going to keep well in there if the fridge is open. So here are general principles that really have to do with how anybody's brain works. This is not good for anybody. And then beyond that, modify things to fit your brain, your work style, all of that. But the most important thing is always how are you talking to yourself about what you're doing, that matters more than anything else.

Vikki: 100% and how you're talking to yourself about yourself. That's the number one driver of time. That's the number one driver of time wasted. That's the number one driver of time inefficiencies and that's the number one driver of what you do and don't get done.

Kara: Amen.

Vikki: It's funny as I'm listening to what you teach and what I teach is it's kind of like mine's the top down and yours sounds like they're bottom up.

Kara: That's how I approach coaching though because I really teach, I mean I have always found that for coaching, at least if we coach from the top down, nobody feels worthy, I know. People come in there and they're like, "I have low self-esteem." And I'm like, "Okay, what did you do yesterday?" Because if you're experienced at coaching, you can start with bigger picture. You might realize, I have this belief about money, I'll start shifting that, it's I big picture.

But for people who are just beginning given a lot of people have been to talk therapy, a lot of people are on the social media site, Pop Psychology. People are thinking a lot at an abstract level that is not translating into any actual cognitive change or emotional change. And so yeah, I am a big fan, in my coaching work, it's like, "Okay, but I understand that you hate your

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

body and you've always hated your body. What did you say to yourself this morning when you got dressed.? Let's work on shifting that thought.”

So yeah, I mean I think I am, it is a funny thing about me, I'm a big picture thinker, but when it comes to implementation, I'm really start small, build up. I work with a lot of perfectionists who are like, “Okay, I made my perfect plan.” And I'm like, “How about that thing you've been putting off for six months, let's just commit to doing four minutes of it today.”

Vikki: Right. Well, that's actually more similar to what I do actually. It's more like what are the three things that are going to make this week a successful week and let's start there. And that's how you measure it instead of like this is how I'm going to do it. It's, what are the outcomes you want to create and let's just work on that. And then it gives the flexibility to be like, “Actually, I'm going to take Thursday off, or actually, I've got a doctor's appointment on Wednesday and it doesn't matter, I'm not doing something that day [crosstalk].”

Kara: Yeah. It may depend a lot on who your clients are, but I think for my clients because they're such perfectionists, a lot of what happens, a calendar is actually, they have the most mental breakdowns about the calendar. And it's not because the calendar is bad. It's because they are living in complete denial of how much they can get done and when. And they actually need to have that come to reality moment of okay, so just to be clear on what I'm telling myself I should do would require 72 hours in a 24 hour period. So something has to give.

There's so much, it's sort of like people think the calendar is the answer. The calendar is the 4% at the end when you have done all the emotional work. That is just a tool and then you can adapt it. Do you really want to use your calendar? Do you want to use it somewhat? Do you want to move things around? Whatever, I move shit around on my calendar.

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

Vikki: [Crosstalk].

Kara: Yeah, I put it on to be realistic with myself, about okay, well, you said you had these five priorities for the week or three, whatever. You have 12 meetings and four podcast interviews. Where is that going? That sort of denial and time blindness, which can be a neurodivergence issue, but also can just be kind of a perfectionist delusional issue.

Vikki: Absolutely. I even remember before I was even coaching around time, a lot of things I was coaching on were about time, but I didn't know this was going to be my work in the world. But I just remember coaching someone who was convinced that they had to get 20 things done in a day and wouldn't let go of this idea.

Kara: A random number.

Vikki: I know and it was like, "How's that going for you?" Because what happens is you have 20 things on Monday, you get maybe three things done and then suddenly on Tuesday you've got 37 things.

Kara: How are you counting things? Is the task send the email, is the task draft the email, think about the email? I mean it's so arbitrary. Yeah, people get very, we just put our worth on that number. I just coached somebody yesterday in my advanced certification in feminist coaching about, she was like, "It's okay to charge 200, but even 210 is dangerous." And she was like, "And I think that feeling means 200 is right."

And I was like, "No, that feeling means that you've attached your safety psychologically, arbitrarily to \$200 and the same thing of if I do the 20." we're all looking for ways to judge and evaluate whether we're okay or not. If I hit the number on the scale or I do the 20 things or I finish my to-do list even though I made my to-do list completely delusional or whatever. Then

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

that's how I know if I'm okay today. Am I allowed to go to sleep not hating myself today, or do I have to feel bad about myself? We have all these metrics for kind of evaluating whether we're up to snuff on a given day?

Vikki: 100%. And I think you're right. I think the reason why we love numbers is because numbers are known and they're measurable and we can measure ourselves against them. So we attach safety to numbers in terms of our time, in terms of our to-do list, in terms of our finances, in terms of our weight, in terms of all of these things because it's a known variable. And it's way scarier to be like, it's just the unknown things happening, which is the reality of life. Yeah.

Kara: Yeah. I'll just fight and avoid. What else do we need to tell people?

Vikki: What else do we need to tell people? Is there anything else that even you thought about coming on here?

Kara: We've covered a lot.

Vikki: Yeah, we have covered a lot. But one of the fun things that came up actually when I was coaching you that I did want to share with people was about reading books and not having to read them immediately.

Kara: That's been a whole thing. That's been a thing for me for years. That sort of I had this belief that if you're going to, I will say I still haven't read any books, but I just don't stress about it anymore. Just to be clear for people listening. I've read a lot of books in my life. My father was a rare book dealer and we didn't have a TV. So I read a lot growing up, but a lot of it was sort of, I hadn't made that connection. But I wonder if part of my resistance is feeling like I was assigned a lot of books to read growing up.

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

And so anyway, what had come up was that I had this, I remember having this at the beginning of my business where I was so overwhelmed by how many resources were out there for how to learn to do anything. And so I would just not take in any resources basically because I was like, "It's too much and overwhelming." At that stage of my business I did actually need to learn some shit. And so I came up with the rule of like, you just find one thing you implement, that's fine.

And then it had resurfaced when I was working with you and we talked about that same thing of reading a book doesn't mean I'm now committing to implement this entire process and do everything in the book. And we worked through that and I actually, I hadn't thought about that since then. But the upshot has not been that I read more books now. I mean, I read novels. I read fiction. I still don't read most of the business books I have, or the coaching books I have or whatever, but I don't really stress about that anymore.

I just have decided I don't need to and it's fine. And maybe someday I will, but I think I have been creating my own body, I mean, I got an education. I think it's important to learn about what you're doing, but at this stage, it's sort of, well, I can work on the book I'm writing, that comes out next year or I can read somebody else's book. And that's where I am. So I think this is just a good example of how you never know what the outcome of coaching is going to be like. You think you're coaching to one end and then it turns out to be totally different, but you needed that coaching to get you there.

Vikki: Absolutely. And one of my Time Hackers actually shared this recently, Kelly, it was amazing and she said she uses books like Oracle cards. She was just like pick them up and get what I need from it instead of again how we've been taught we should read and what it should look like versus you literally, there are no fucking rules. Everything is a tool for you. We're not a

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

tool for our calendars. We're not a tool for our goals, that were there for us, they were books.

Kara: It was coming from being an English major too, because I used to have to close read text and mark things up. And the scholarship I was producing was a close reading, whereas especially with, let's be real coaching and business books, even my book on some level, a 30 pager would get the core ideas across. I mean I think my book is going to have a lot of concrete exercises people can do. So let's say it could be 100 pages, but a lot of books that you read out there, there's one idea that is useful. You could read the book proposal probably and you'd be fine, but it has to be 250 pages because that's what the publisher wants.

Vikki: And also I will say I also do sometimes like the repetitiveness of a book.

Kara: Yeah, it can make you really absorb it for sure when it's a really important useful one.

Vikki: Which yours will be. Do you have the title already?

Kara: Yes, it's called *Take Back Your Brain*.

Vikki: What? So good.

Kara: Yeah, How Sexist Thinking Can Trap You and How to Break Free.

Vikki: Oh my God, it's going to be so. So if you are listening to this in May...

Kara: After yeah, after May 21st, 2024 on or after or the week, actually, that's not true. If you're listening to this by January 2024 you should pre

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

order the book. If you're listening to it after May 21st you can just order the book.

Vikki: Perfect and pre ordering the book is a time hack.

Kara: There you go, yeah. It'll save you, you won't have to take my whole coaching course, it's going to be really much more condensed.

Vikki: Amazing. Cool. I think we've given everyone lots to think about. If I was listening to this podcast episode, I would probably relisten. And if you usually listen to your podcast episodes on double speed, you might want to slow it down. Maybe should go back to the start. But I do think this is an amazing episode for everyone to really listen to and take notes.

And also like we've just shared, maybe just think about what's the one thing that I want to take from it today? Instead of I need to implement all these things and change everything all at once. So that's I think the perfect reminder for us all. So let people know, I mean you've kind of teased.

Kara: *UnF*ck Your Brain* is my podcast, you can find that anywhere you get your podcast. Or go to unfuckyourbrain.com and all of my social media handles are Kara Loewentheil, which is a beast to spell, but I'm sure will be on the show notes here. Also, at this point my SEO is good enough that if you butcher the last name, you'll probably still find me. K-A-R-A and then some version of Loewentheil will get you where you need to go.

Vikki: Perfect. That's why I went with Vikki Louise, instead of my surname because no one can spell it right, including me.

Kara: Yeah, Kara Ann just had a real southern sound that I felt like probably wouldn't work as well.

UFYB 301: UnF*ck Your Time: A Conversation with Vikki Louise

Vikki: Amazing, thank you. Thank you so much for being here. We will get all the links in the show now. Great to see you as always. And this was an amazing episode. So I hope everyone enjoyed.

Kara: Thank you.

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.