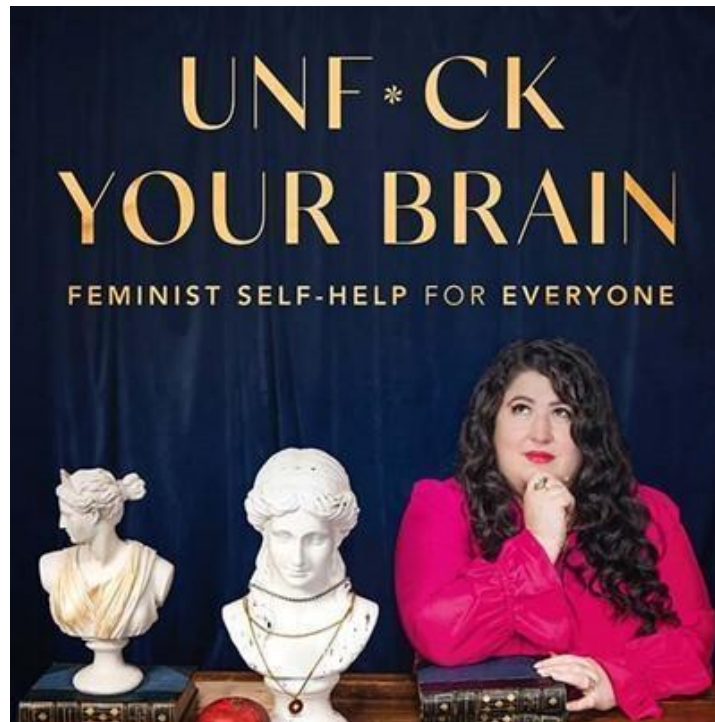


UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

Welcome to *Unf*ck Your Brain*. I'm your host, Kara Loewentheil, Master Certified Coach and founder of The School of New Feminist Thought. I'm here to help you turn down your anxiety, turn up your confidence, and create a life on your own terms. One that you're truly excited to live. Let's go.

Hello my chickens. So this podcast now gets about a quarter of a million downloads a month, and I've only ever met the tiniest fraction of you all. How is that possible that I love you even though I've never met you? And what does that even mean when I say that?

So let's start with what love is. Love is a feeling. Bet you knew that one. Love is a feeling. It's a set of sensations in your body. That is really all it is, which is kind of mind-blowing in and of itself. Love is just a set of sensations in your body.

And it's created by your thoughts. This is so important because we think that we love other people. We think that other people's character or their personality or their looks or their actions determine whether we love them, but that's not true. Other people don't earn, create, or destroy our love. It all comes from our thoughts.

Plenty of us have loved people who did things to us that other people might think were terrible, or even that we thought were terrible. And at the same time, we have not loved people who we would have admitted were totally nice to us because what other people do doesn't determine whether we love them.

And fascinatingly, what we think about what they have done doesn't determine if we love them a lot of the time. So even if we acknowledge that our analysis of someone else's behavior, like our thought, "That was nice," or, "That was mean," is subjective, often we might think someone isn't

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

treating us well and we still love them, or we might think someone is treating us well and we don't love them.

So our love for someone else is not determined by how they act, and it's not even always determined by our thoughts about how they act. It's actually simply determined by the thought that we love them or that we don't. That's really it. If you think the thought that you love someone, you will feel love for them.

And you will look for more and more things about them to love and your brain will find them. Your brain is like a hunting dog or like a drug detection dog. It goes after what you train it to go after, and it always finds it. If you tell it to look for reasons you love someone, it will find you more reasons. And if you tell it to look for reasons you hate someone, it will find you more reasons.

It will always find you what you tell it to look for. This is why you can love someone who you're angry at or hate at the same time, because as long as you're thinking that you love them, you will still feel love. So if you think, "I love her, how could she be so terrible to me?" you are actually still creating love with the first half of that thought. You're thinking that you love her, and that creates love. And then you're thinking that she was terrible, and that creates anger or frustration or hurt or sadness or whatever.

So you'll feel love and then whatever that negative emotion is. Both. You'll feel both of them. It really is that simple. We all try to complicate it, especially with love, and it's not complicated. When you think about loving someone, you will feel love for them. If you look for reasons to love someone, you will find them.

So then the question is why do we find it so difficult to love some people or why do we want to stop loving people. And I think it's because we have the wrong assumptions about how love works and what it means. So first, we

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

think that other people have to deserve our love. We think that our love is somehow of benefit to other people. Like it's this gift that we're giving them, it's somehow to their benefit and so they have to earn it. They have to deserve it, like it has anything to do with them.

We think that they can feel our love and they have to be good enough to get it. But it's nonsense. They can't feel your love at all. No one else can feel your love, and you can't feel anyone else's love because your thoughts create your feelings and their thoughts create their feelings.

So when you love someone, you are the one who feels that love. If someone else loves you, they are the one who feels that love. But you don't feel their love and they don't feel your love. We have all experienced someone else being very into us. It could be a friend or a date or a family member, where we found their love for us off-putting. It did not feel good. They loved us so much but we did not feel their love because of our thoughts about it.

And at the same time, we have often loved someone who is totally unmoved by our love for them. Even though we felt so much, they didn't feel anything. Only you can feel your own love. And your love is the only love you can ever feel. And even more than that, all love is really the same, and I really mean that.

I think in our culture, we tend to kind of get taught, or we have this belief system that there are all these different kinds of love. That you love your romantic partner differently than your friends, and you love your kids differently than you love your parents. But I don't believe that that is inherently true.

Your thoughts about those people are different, which is why you feel differently about them. So for instance, we have this current cultural belief that there's no love like the love of a parent for their child. But that's

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

obviously not true. Many parents are indifferent to their children or actively dislike them, or hate them, or even harm them.

And some people in the world would do way more for their romantic partners or their friends than for their family members. We also tend to think that love is created by duration. We think that when we start dating someone, we like them, and then at a certain point we love them, but I don't think that's true either.

Plenty of people believe in love at first sight and they believe in it because they experience it, and they experience it because they believe in it. It's a circle. And meanwhile, sometimes you like someone more at first and less as time goes on. It's all based on what you're thinking about them at any given moment.

If you come to love someone more and more, it's because your thoughts about them change. On the first date you're thinking, "They're cute, they seem smart, I'll give this a chance." And then a year in you're thinking, "Wow, we have amazing sex and they're so nice to me and supportive." And then a decade in you're thinking, "This is the parent of my children and our lives are bound together forever."

You're having different thoughts about them at each stage, and for some people that means they feel more and more love. Now obviously, it goes the other way too. Sometimes, over the phases of a relationship, people feel less love because their thoughts have changed in the other direction.

Your love for someone is created by your thoughts about them. That means you can love whoever you want, whenever you want. Love is always an option for you. A lot of the suffering that we create for ourselves comes from denying ourselves the feeling of love. We literally choose not to create love or to try to stop ourselves from feeling it.

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

I was thinking about that a lot this week because I just experienced an instance of this in my own life that I'm going to tell you all about. So I was dating someone for a couple of months and we had to end the relationship because of some outside factors. It wasn't because we weren't compatible, we weren't connecting, or one of us didn't like the other anymore.

There were just some life circumstances that meant it wasn't the right time. So we were both sad about it. Of course, he, because of his thoughts, whatever they were, and me, because of my own thoughts. And I was practicing what I teach you all of course, which is allowing the emotion, not distracting myself from it.

And one of the reasons, by the way, that that's so important is because if you are constantly distracting yourself, you will never figure out what's going on with you. I was actually coaching - this is a little side bar - I was coaching and working with a bunch of coaches who are trying to make their first 100,000 their first year.

And I was coaching one of them about this the other day because she was using her phone to distract herself all the time, and one of the things I said to her was like, as a coach, your whole job is to be present to and aware of your internal life. That's what we do is we pay attention to our minds so we can teach other people how to do it.

And so if you are distracting yourself all the time, it's so damaging because you're never going to get access or insight to what's going on with you. That's true for all of you. You don't need to be a coach. If you're trying to do this work and learn more about your own mind, learn more about yourself, learn more about your brain and be able to change it, every time you distract yourself, you sacrifice and opportunity to learn something.

That's what I want you to think about. It's not like you get the gold star in heaven if you just feel the most negative emotion. It doesn't make you a

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

better person. Every time you distract yourself from your current present experience, you lose the chance to learn about yourself, and you lose the chance to grow.

So, I was not distracting myself. Back to the story. I was allowing the emotion, I was paying attention to see what was going on, and obviously I have been coaching myself for many years now. I knew I wasn't making it mean anything about myself. A lot of you, when you're going through breakups, they're so crushing because of what you make it mean about yourself and your future.

But I had really managed my mind in this whole relationship and done a good job of staying in the present. I hadn't projected into the future about it and I wasn't making the end of it mean anything about me or my value or my future happiness or who else I could meet. I really wasn't doing any of that.

But I did realize, I still had a thought error that was creating suffering. It was like, a next level thought error. And that thought was that going forward, I would no longer get to feel the positive feeling of loving him. So that was the loss that I was anticipating and creating for myself. I was telling myself that I was losing the ability to experience him, but really of course, that's just my thoughts about him.

Any time I think I'm experiencing him or anyone else, it's just my thoughts about them. So I was telling myself that I would no longer get to experience the positive feeling of thinking positive thoughts about him, but that's not true. That's a lie because he's still who he is and more importantly, my thoughts can be what they are. Who knows who he really is, it's all my thoughts about him.

But all the things I'd chosen to think positively about him, I could still think positively about. I could still love those things. If I think thoughts right now

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

about loving those things about him, I feel love for him. It feels amazing, whether we're dating or not.

When I think about it that way, whether or not we're in a phase of life where we happen to be sexually intimate or romantically involved is so irrelevant. Whether we even hang out in person is irrelevant. That dimension to the relationship is fun but it's not the point. Feeling love is always the point, and I can always choose to feel love for him, whether I hang out with him platonically next week or never again, whether I was married to him or never spoke to him again.

I can always choose to feel love when he comes to mind, whether that's 10 times a day when we're involved or once a year when we're not. And I want to actually make a note. We had only been dating for two months, and some people would think it's crazy to call that feeling love when you've only known someone for two months.

But I think it's all love. How you feel about your friends, your partner, your family, liking someone is just a light version of loving them. Love is not this special, rare emotion that you can only feel when the stars are perfectly aligned and everyone is following your manual and causing your feelings, and they've all put in the right amount of time and effort to earn it.

I can feel love for the UPS woman and my parents and someone I dated for 10 years a decade ago or two months or someone I just saw on the street. If I think thoughts that create love, that's what I will feel. There is no downside to choosing love. But we try to stifle our love for people and I think that's because we have two erroneous thoughts that are kind of related.

So number one, we think that there's only a certain amount of love to go around. And number two, we think that loving someone means we have to act or not act in a certain way, and so we resist, we stifle our own love

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

because we think we won't have enough for anyone else, or that it's painful to love, and then we also try to shut it down because we think that if we feel the feeling, it will have consequences for how we have to act that we don't want.

So let me give you an example. First, we think that loving one person means we have less love for someone else. So if I told this story I just told you guys to someone who doesn't know about thought work, doesn't know about my work, and I was like, "Well, you know, we only dated for two months and we had to breakup but I still love him and I'm choosing love for him on purpose," they would probably be like, that's a terrible idea.

Firstly, they'd be like, "Well, you can't love him, you barely know him, and that's a terrible idea. Now you're going to be hung up on him and not want to date other people." That makes both errors at once. Number one, it assumes if I love him, I can't love other people, but that's not true because love is not about attachment.

That presumes that the way that I love him is some like, special, sacred romantic love of which there's this finite amount, and so I wouldn't be able to love anyone else. Like I'd somehow be wasting it. But it's not, right? I can love as much as I can think about love.

So if I can have 40,000 thoughts a day, if they were all about love, maybe that would be my maximum capacity, but I can think thoughts that create love endlessly. There isn't a finite amount. And it's not about attachment. So if I sat around thinking thoughts about how I could only be happy with him and I needed to be able to date him, that would keep me hung up because that would be resisting reality, which is that we are not, and it would be telling myself that I was powerless, that something else caused my feelings and I can't have it.

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

That's what people are worried about with love. That thought pattern has nothing to do with love. It's totally unrelated. That is a thought pattern of scarcity and resistance to reality, which is the opposite of love. So those things are not connected at all. Choosing to feel love for him, just like choosing to feel love for the person that I was in a relationship with 10 years ago, who I can still feel love if I want to, if I think about him. That hasn't kept me from dating people for the last 10 years. They're totally unrelated.

Loving someone has nothing to do with them making you happy or needing circumstances to be a certain way. It's entirely an internal experience created by your thoughts. Number two, it assumes that loving someone means I'd have to take a certain action or not take a certain action. But again, that's only because it assumes this attachment.

You can love someone and never speak to them again. Choosing to love someone doesn't mean that you have to do anything in particular about them or to them or with them or for them. It doesn't mean you have to sacrifice for them, it doesn't mean you have to make them happy. It doesn't mean they have to be part of your life or a priority in making your decisions.

You can choose to love someone and all that means is you are creating the feeling of love for yourself, and this is entirely separate from what actions you're going to take. We have this belief, I think, that love makes us powerless. We think that love controls us or makes us vulnerable, but it doesn't. What does that are the thoughts we have about what we make love mean.

We make it mean we have to act a certain way or other people should act a certain way, and then we feel trapped or obligated or resentful. But all we're really scared of is that we will stop feeling love and we'll feel something else we don't like instead, and that's up to us. Choosing to love someone makes me feel enormously powerful. I feel untouchable. I feel so grounded

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

and secure and expansive because that love feels amazing and no one can take that away from me and I can feel it any time I want.

What could be better? Why would I not choose to love everyone who comes across my path, especially people who I have some relationship with or have been intimate with? Choosing to feel love is never a bad choice. The only reason you think it's a bad choice is because you make it mean something about someone else's ability to hurt you, which doesn't exist, or about what actions you're going to take.

If you think that loving someone means you have to stay in a relationship you don't want to be in, if you think that loving someone means you have to give up your dreams, if you think that loving someone means you have to give them all your money, whatever it is, none of it means any of that. Choosing to create love as an emotional experience for yourself is completely unrelated to what actions you're going to take.

I shouldn't say completely unrelated because your actions will flow from love. When you choose to feel love without attachment, you will pick certain actions, but they're almost never the actions that you predicted you should take if you love someone. So choosing to feel love has nothing to do with a predetermined set of actions or obligations.

Now, you always get to decide, of course, it's up to you. You don't have to feel love if you don't want, but love has never been the wrong answer for me. When I choose to feel love, it's for me. It's for my own benefit. It is a beautiful feeling and I'm the one who gets to feel it.

Sometimes I hear clients say, "Well, I don't want to love this person because then if I feel good about them, then I realize that they could be taken away from me," but that doesn't matter because they're not causing your love in the first place. It's your own thoughts.

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

So you get to feel love for them if you want, whether they're there or not or no matter what happens. Loving unconditionally without attachment is the most sacred practice I have, the closest thing to want to have. And the more I learn to love others, the more I learn to love myself.

So I want to tell you all another story to finish this episode. I have a friend who's a coach and I met her through our coaching work, and I instantly fell in love with her. I just thought she was amazing. She's smart and funny and interesting and weird and beautiful. All my thoughts about her just created love right from the start.

And it seemed like it was mutual, but over time I started to see that I did most of the initiating. I had the thought that I was more invested in the friendship than she was. And I didn't take that personally because I just saw that in general in her life, she didn't prioritize friendship as much as I did.

She had a new romantic relationship and that became a marriage and she had her work and our friendship wasn't as important to her as it was to me. Those were my thoughts about it. I decided consciously that I did not care. I actually kept the thought that it might be more important to me than to her, but that I didn't care. It didn't matter. That I would be the one to text her more, I would be the one to fly out to see her. I would be the one to make more of the effort to keep the friendship going.

Now, notice I'm saying more. I'm not saying all. I do not recommend flying out to see someone who doesn't ever answer your texts about whether you should visit, or who tells you they don't want to hang out with you. I'm not talking about stalking anyone. We were friends and it was reciprocal, I was just putting more energy into it than she was.

I decided that it felt amazing to love her and our friendship was so beautiful to me and because I enjoyed her so much, which again really, I'm just

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

enjoying my own thoughts about her, but I loved them, they were great. I was going to be the person in charge of keeping the friendship going. I just took that consciously on and I just decided I'm never going to worry about it again. Unless some day she tells me she really doesn't want to be friends with me, I'm just going to keep doing this.

So many people would not have done that. They would have made the imbalance mean something like that she didn't deserve their love or she didn't love them back or they were desperate or there was something wrong with them. And I chose not to make it mean any of that, and we actually would joke about how I was making her be friends with me.

So we've been friends for almost four years now to the month, and my friend - she's also a coach, as I said, she's been doing a lot of her own deep work on herself. And the other day she sent me this message and it said, "I really deeply appreciate that you insisted and kept insisting that we be friends. Not because I ever thought I don't want to be friends with Kara, but because my brain was so caught up in 'I don't have time for friends, I must work.'"

That part was in all caps. "I feel like without all the energy you invested in us, I would have really missed out on something special, so thank you. I want to eat all the meals with you always and sit next to you at all the things." So here's what I love about this. On one level, it seems like the happy ending is like, oh, she came around and realized that friendship is good and I got rewarded for my love.

But that's not the real ending. The thought work at the ending is that this note did not change my feelings about her at all. That note made no difference to my feelings because I had already decided that I just loved her no matter what. So, the fact that now she has different thoughts about the friendship, it makes no difference to me.

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

It's like, nice, maybe it's a tiny bonus, but I don't feel any differently about it. She's the one who now feels that happiness, so now I can think - now I get a little bump because I can think, oh now she gets to feel happy too and I love her and now she feels happy, so that's even better. It's still my thoughts.

But I already felt that. I was already believing in our friendship and loving her the whole time. So this note really changes nothing for me and that's what I actually love about this story and about thought work is that it's not like the happy ending. It's not like this note makes it all worth it. It doesn't matter.

I already loved her, I already got to feel that love. I already got the benefit of those four years of feeling love for her. The fact that she now feels more of it, fine. It doesn't make a difference to me really. I don't feel any differently. The person you choose to love is not always going to write you a note recognizing that, and they may not even notice it, but it won't matter. That's the real point.

You will be putting love out there into the universe and you're the one who's going to get to enjoy it. Alright, so that is love.

Alright my dear chickens, I will talk to you next week.

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

UFYB 71: Love + Reading List Giveaway

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