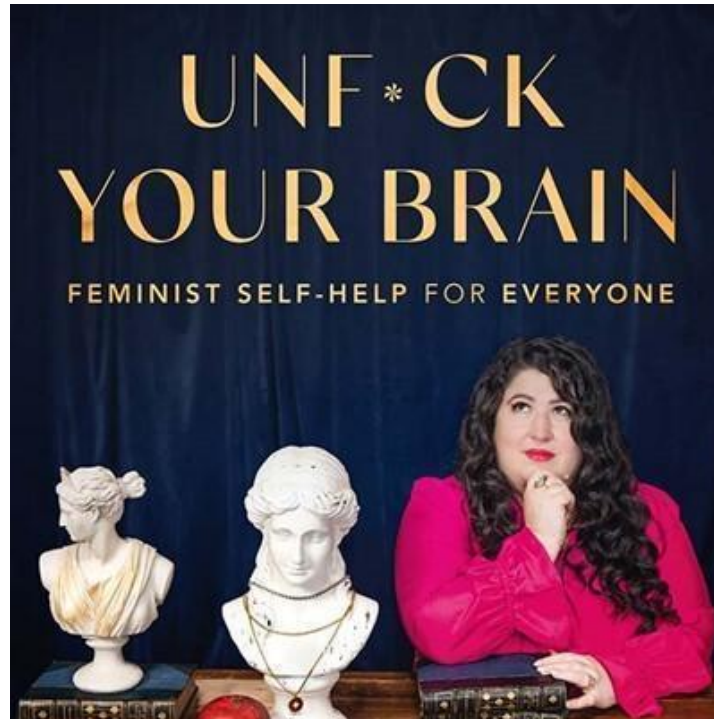


UFYB 146: Using TW Against Yourself



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.

Hello my chickens. How are you? There is a heatwave in New York right now, so I'm a very steamy chicken. I have to research how chickens cool themselves off. I think they probably do dust baths, right? Like birds do. That does not seem like my style.

I actually always used to think that I wasn't into nature, that I was a city girl. But what I realized this summer is I do like nature; I just like to look at it rather than be in it. I like nature from a porch, possibly a screened in porch because I get a lot of bug bites. I don't want to hike in it. I just want to watch it from comfort.

So, I am getting ready this week to take some time off from work finally and one of the things I'm preparing my brain for is how we're going to not do that much during this vacation. We are - by vacation, we're obviously not going anywhere, given the pandemic. I just mean not working.

We are not going to be industrious is what I'm preparing my brain for. We might go for a walk. It probably won't even be a hike. In my brain, probably like your brain, always thinks that vacation is somehow a time to master various hobbies that would make me a better person and just kind of improve myself in my leisure time, but we're not doing that because I don't need improving. Neither do you.

I am excited though to read and sleep and think. I get a lot of my best ideas when I take time off, which is part of why I try to encourage all of you to not be constantly hustling, not trying to overwork towards your goals because your brain needs to marinade.

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I took a long weekend last weekend for instance and I came up with a great idea for the next Clutch College online, which I'm super excited about. It's going to be all about relationship anxiety because that's such a big issue. I was thinking about doing a dating course, and then I just realized that it doesn't really matter. Of course, the circumstance isn't what matters.

Whether you're single or looking for a partner or dating or in a relationship, it's the anxiety about your relationship status, being alone or not being alone, worrying about what your partner's thinking about you or if they're upset with you, being afraid of being single, whether you currently are or aren't. All of that is all the same.

So, such an important issue for women to tackle I think. I'm super excited to dig into that and help some of my Clutch chickens really transform that area of their lives. So if you're listening to this and you're in The Clutch and you're freaking out, don't worry, it's coming. This will be happening in the fall. You haven't missed anything. This is the first mention of it. And I will release more details in The Clutch later in August or in September.

So it's coming. Watch that space. And if you are not in The Clutch but this is something you struggle with, this would be a good time to join The Clutch so you can come participate in that class. It's going to be amazing.

So I can't wait to see what I come up with during this time off, but before I do that, cannot in good conscience rest until I teach you all about how to stop using thought work against yourselves. And you'll see as I get through this episode, it actually relates to relationship anxiety in quite a few ways.

So on this episode, I'm going to teach you what this means. How you might be using thought work against yourself, how to know if you're doing it, and how to stop doing it. If you are new to this podcast, this is not the first episode that you should listen to.

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If you're new, I want you to make sure that you understand the basics. Listen to some of the previous episodes where I talk about thoughts and feelings and how you can change thoughts and the thought ladder episode, and all those basics of thought work concepts before you try to apply this.

This is an advanced concept. If you try to understand it before you understand the basics of thought work, you may miss some of the subtlety that's important. But if you've been doing this work a while, and especially if you're in The Clutch and you're really learning how to coach yourself systematically and how to set goals and achieve them and how to change the relationships in your life, that's when this becomes super important.

So let's define what I mean when I say that it's even possible to use thought work against yourself. What does that even mean? What I mean is that sometimes we use thought work in a way that is not actually promoting our own growth and evolution and it's not coming from self-love or self-acceptance or an abundant mindset. I'm going to explain what all that means.

Any thought work that is not based in self-love or self-acceptance and belief in yourself is using thought work against yourself. And any thought work that is based on scarcity thinking, that there's not enough out there or not enough for you is using thought work against yourself.

So I'm going to explain more about what that means, but there's a very important disclaimer that you need to hear first. I'm not at all saying that you need to be perfect in your self-love and self-acceptance before doing thought work. That would be nonsense.

We use thought work to create the neural patterns to produce self-acceptance and self-love. So I'm not saying that if you notice that you don't like or love yourself and you decide to use thought work to work on

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that, that that is using it against yourself. Obviously not. That's the whole point of this work is to learn to accept and then even love ourselves.

And I'm not saying you have to be perfect at that before you can use it on other things. What I'm talking about has to do with the premise or intention behind the thought work. So let me give you a few examples that will help you understand what I mean when I say that if you are using it against yourself, it's coming out of a lack of belief in yourself or a lack of belief in your potential and opportunities.

So there are two main ways that you can use thought work against yourself. The first one is using thought work to change who you are or how you behave so that you can then like or love yourself once that problem is solved or fixed. So, using thought work to change yourself so that you can then like or love yourself once you've changed.

And the second is using thought work to not make changes in your life based on beliefs in your own unworthiness or the scarcity of what's available to you in the world. So, I'm going to explain each of those in detail. Those are the two general kind of ways.

So the first one is when you use thought work to change something about yourself so that you can then like or love yourself. That's a way of using thought work against yourself because you're accepting the premise that you are flawed and need to change before you can like yourself. And then you just want to use thought work as the tool that you use to become a better person so that then you can like yourself.

A lot of us do this when we come to thought work. It's a totally normal stage. We don't like ourselves; we're looking for a way to change ourselves. That's how we find thought work in the first place, most of us. So then we think, okay perfect, I found this method, it actually works, I'm going

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to use it to change the things I don't like about myself, and then I'll finally be able to change myself.

So for instance, let's say you think you're too needy in dating and so you want to use thought work to become chill in dating because you believe that you'll like yourself once you're chill. Do you see what I'm saying? It's like you make liking yourself conditional on reaching a certain goal, which might be external, like making a certain amount of money or looking a certain way, or it might be internal, like not getting angry at your kids.

And because you're trying to make that change, so that you can like yourself, you see thought work as this tool that you're going to use to achieve the goal, and you think, once I'm at the goal, then I will like myself. Your logic is I don't like myself because I yell at my kids. That makes me a bad mom. If I didn't yell at my kids, then I'd be a good mom and I could like myself.

Thought work lets me change my thoughts, feelings, and actions, like yelling at my kids. So I'm going to change the thoughts that lead to yelling at my kids. And once I've changed that action and become a good mom, then I'll be able to like myself.

You're using thought work to fix something you think is wrong with you. And when you're trying to use thought work that way, it's not any different than trying to use a diet to lose weight to then like yourself. It's the same thing. You're just using thought work as a tool to fix yourself so you can finally like yourself.

And it's using it against yourself because you're accepting the premise that you are bad or wrong, and you're trying to use thought work instrumentally, as a tool to change yourself so you can then like yourself. And then feel good enough after you've changed. So you can see how it's not any

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different than trying to use a diet to lose weight so you can like yourself at a thinner weight.

So bear in mind, this has nothing to do with the actual thing you want to change. You might have a goal that's an awesome goal if you were doing it for the right reasons. It's always about the premise and the intention. So what I mean is you can totally use thought work to make a million dollars or stop yelling at your kids in a way that feels amazing, in a way that is self-supporting, where you accept yourself and love yourself and you want to create this result.

Or you can use it in a way that feels terrible, where you try to use thought work to create a result so that you can eventually like yourself. It's not about the actual goal. It's not that making a million dollars or not yelling at your kids is inherently for or against yourself. It's about the reason you're wanting to do it and your intention in using the thought work.

So long as you make your self-acceptance conditional on achieving the goal and you try to use thought work to get to the goal so that you will then magically like yourself, you're using thought work against yourself.

And so, the solution is to use the thought work on your self-acceptance now. Not to use thought work to try to become a mom who doesn't yell at her kids so that you can finally think you're a good mom. No. You use the thought work to see the ways you already are a good mom and believe that you are a good mom and accept yourself, even at the times you do yell at your kids, stop making that mean you're a terrible mom.

And when you accept yourself, it will actually be much easier to then use thought work to change the behavior. The more you love yourself, the easier it is to achieve a goal or change your behavior. I 100% guarantee that is true. If you have anything in your life you want to create, any

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behavior you want to start or stop, the fastest way to get there is to work on your thoughts about yourself.

Thought work is a tool to help you accept reality before you decide how you want to change it, and that includes you, yourself. Accepting and loving yourself as you are before you decide if there's anything you want to change. It is not a tool to use to fix yourself so you can finally feel good enough. That is using it against yourself and it won't work.

So the second way that people use thought work against themselves is when they use thought work to justify decisions that are actually being made out of scarcity thinking. So again, let me give you some examples of what that looks like. It's easier to understand in application.

If you've been listening for a while, you know I always recommend doing the thought work to love whatever you're hating or resisting before you make decisions about whether to try to change it. Of course, there are always exceptions. If you're in physical danger for instance, but generally, that's what I recommend.

Learn to love it, then decide whether you want to change it. Not because there's any moral value to doing that. It's just that when you're not managing your mind, you actually can't see clearly to make a clear decision. You don't know what you would believe with a managed mind because you're taking action based on your unmanaged mind.

And your brain goes with you wherever you go. So if you don't change the thought pattern, even if you change the circumstance, you get a different job, you leave the relationship, you take up a hobby or you stop doing something or you drop off that board or whatever it is, you will replicate your experience in the next job or relationship or hobby or volunteer thing or exercise or whatever.

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Because your thought patterns are going with you. If you haven't changed your thinking, you're just going to keep having the same experience, so you're going to have to do work eventually probably. But this is a teaching that people often use against themselves because they use it to justify staying in a situation that they would actually want to leave if they truly thought they were worthy and they thought there were other options out there for them.

So, let me give you some examples. Let's say you hate your job and you don't believe you're good enough to do another one or good enough to get another one at least, that you hate your job but also you're not good at your job so no one else would hire you and also there's no good jobs in your industry. A lot of people think that.

So you want to use thought work to love your job. The problem is that the whole reason you want to love your job is not to learn something, to grow, to actually just love it because that seems fun. It's because you don't think you're good enough to get another job or you don't think there's any other good jobs out there.

So the intention behind using the thought work in that scenario is to feel better or make it easier to make a choice that is actually based on subconscious scarcity and lack of self-worth. So just like how in the previous example I gave you, I said you can do thought work to stop yelling at your kids in a way that's totally self-loving or in a way that's totally self-loathing. PS, only one of those will work.

If you do it from a place of self-loathing, you won't stop yelling at your kids most of the time. Similarly, you can do thought work to love your job in a way that is truly about learning the power of your mind, to be happy in any circumstance, with the intention of being curious, to see whether at the end of that process, you do want to get a new job or not.

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From a place of knowing, of course there are other options for me, of course I could get another amazing job, but I really want to learn to love this one because I want to have that experience, because there are all these other parts of this job I do love and think are important, it aligns with my values and I want to learn to love it, it's going to feel very different than if you do thought work to love your job because you've already pre-decided the outcome.

When you're operating from that scarcity, it's like you're not doing the thought work in a way where you're really curious what your experience will be once you love it and open to whatever decision you might make at that point. When you're doing thought work against yourself, you've already decided you have to stay in the job because there aren't any good ones and you're not good enough and you won't be able to get another one and the economy is bad.

You've already decided. You're like, this is the best of bad options. I can't get any better, so I better learn to love what I have. So, so different. And relationships are another great example. I see this so often that women are using thought work to be okay with a partner, not because they want to learn to love someone unconditionally before deciding whether to be with them, but because they've already decided they want to stay in the relationship because of their unconscious scarcity thinking and then they want to use thought work to make that possible.

Again, such an important distinction. One thought process is I have a lot of negative thoughts and feelings about my partner and their behavior. I really want to clean those thoughts up so that I can really see clearly, do I want to be in this relationship? I really want to learn to practice unconditional love because I know that'll be necessary in this relationship or in another relationship.

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I really want to practice not making someone else responsible for my feelings. I really want to do this work and get to a clean place where I love my partner and myself unconditionally. I know they don't cause my happiness or my feelings, and I'm open to any outcome and I'm curious to see at the end of that self-work, thought work process, do I want to stay or do I want to go.

I'm going to believe in myself and my own future and my options no matter what. That's one thought process. That is a good use of thought work. The other is I have a lot of negative thoughts and feelings about my partner's behavior. I want to clean those up so I can be happy in this relationship because I have to stay in it. I can't leave this relationship.

If I leave, I might not be able to find anything better or it would make me a bad mom to leave the father of my children or the mother of my children. There's nothing better out there. There aren't enough, I'm already too old, I really need to stay so I need to learn to love this so I don't have to leave.

One of the things that's tricky about this is often, all of those reasons are subconscious. So when you're new to this, you can see the first thoughts in each of those patterns are the same. I have all these negative thoughts and feelings about my partner, I want to clean these up. And Kara teaches that I should love it before I leave it.

Those two can sound the same, although they'll feel very different. Often, the subconscious reason why you want to do that work that matters. This is why I always say you want to know your reason and like it, and that applies to any action that you take, including thought work.

So, if you're wondering if you're using thought work against yourself, think of thought work as an action you're taking. So just like I would say make sure you know why you want to have that conversation with your mom and make sure you like your reasons, or make sure you know why you want to

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start your business or fold your business and make sure you like your reasons.

Are they thoughts you think are leading to your evolution and growth and that you feel good about? So you can do that with thought work itself. You think of thought work as the action you're taking. Why am I trying to do this particular thought work? Why have I decided this thought work is worth doing? What is my reason?

And tell yourself the truth and see if you like the reason. Even if you do it anyway, even if you don't like the reason but you're not able to change it yet, just being honest with yourself changes everything. Just saying to yourself, I'm working on loving my partner unconditionally because I think he's my only chance at having a family.

Okay, you're still allowed to do it. It's not going to hurt you. But just tell yourself the truth about it so that you aren't using thought work against yourself. You're being honest with yourself.

Now listen, this is not a reason to get paranoid about your own motivations. It is never a waste to do thought work. You will always learn something. And here's what's so important that so many people misunderstand.

If you're doing thought work out of self-loathing or scarcity, you won't get any different outcome than just not doing the thought work at all, in the sense that if you're staying in a job or a relationship because you don't like yourself or you believe you can't have something different, not doing thought work on it and continuing to be miserable will not motivate you to change.

This is a common fear people have. They'll say what if I do thought work just to stay in a situation that I don't really want to be in? If that's your motivation, refraining from doing the thought work won't solve your problem

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because the real problem, the whole reason you're in this situation to begin with is the underlying thoughts about yourself not being good enough or there not being enough options out there or whatever else.

Those thoughts are the reason that you're staying at the job or staying in the relationship. Not doing thought work on it is not going to make a difference. So it's like the fear is if that's the truth that I'm in this job out of scarcity and I do thought work to become okay with the job, then I'll just stay in the job and it'll be the thought work's fault.

But it's misunderstanding what's going on. You're already staying in the job and the reason you're staying in the job is because of your scarcity thinking. Not because of thought work. That whole idea is based on the premise that if you hate something, that will motivate you to leave it.

So it's like I hate my job, I haven't left it because I believe I can't do any better. Now, if I do thought work to see that my job is actually neutral and I can love it, then I'll stay and that's bad. It'll be better if I didn't do thought work and I left. That's not one of the options because the thought work is not the thing that makes you stay or go.

The reason that you're in that job in the first place or in the relationship in the first place is the underlying scarcity thoughts you're having. So not doing thought work and continuing to hate yourself or hate your job, that wouldn't produce any change.

And that's why even though it is possible to use thought work against yourself in this way I'm describing, it's not something to freak out about. It won't lead you to settle for something you wouldn't settle for otherwise. Because it's not the thought work that you do to accept reality or love the person or love the job or whatever that's keeping you there. It's your underlying scarcity thoughts that are keeping you there, whether you do the work to love it or not.

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Your brain is already keeping you in something that you don't want or have negative thoughts about because of these subconscious thoughts of scarcity or self-rejection. Doing the thought work to be able to love the situation isn't what will make you stay. You're already staying because of those scarcity thoughts.

And what I really see happen in reality is that even if you set out to do thought work for these reasons, even if you're using it against yourself, just by doing thought work, you actually end up learning more about yourself and your life, and usually you will ultimately come to see how you were doing that thought work against yourself anyway.

You will get to that awareness. It's just a longer path. But thought work won't hurt you. It is all a learning process. And honestly, sometimes using it against yourself is the only way you can learn to see those underlying thoughts.

So I'm belaboring this point a little bit because I know how y'all are, especially my Clutch chickens. I read your posts in the Facebook group and I ask your ask the coaches. And this is not an invitation for you to get stuck in analysis paralysis about whether you're using thought work against yourself.

It is not a problem if you do. Doesn't mean something's gone wrong. You don't need to be super vigilant about it. It is okay if you do it and honestly, I think it's part of the process and that we all sometimes do it. I just think it's good to be aware of the phenomenon because it will make you more likely to spot it or to spot it sooner in the process and it'll save you some time.

And because it's always a good useful inquiry to ask yourself why you're choosing the thought work you're choosing. Being aware of using thought work against yourself. It's not even really because it's a problem that you do it. It's because if you're aware of this idea, you will see the deeper levels

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of thought work that are there for you to do on the scarcity or on the self-loathing or whatever is behind this desire to use thought work in this way. That's the true work that's worth doing.

It's always a good idea to ask yourself why am I choosing this particular thought work I could be doing. If I could do thought work on either leaving this job or staying in this job or leaving this relationship or staying in the relationship, which one am I choosing and why? Let me see why I think that's the thought work I want to do. Do I like that reason? Do I want to keep it?

The good news is that no matter what thought work you choose, you are going to learn and grow and evolve, and that's the whole point of this endeavor anyway. Alright, have a beautiful week my chickens and I will talk to you next week.

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