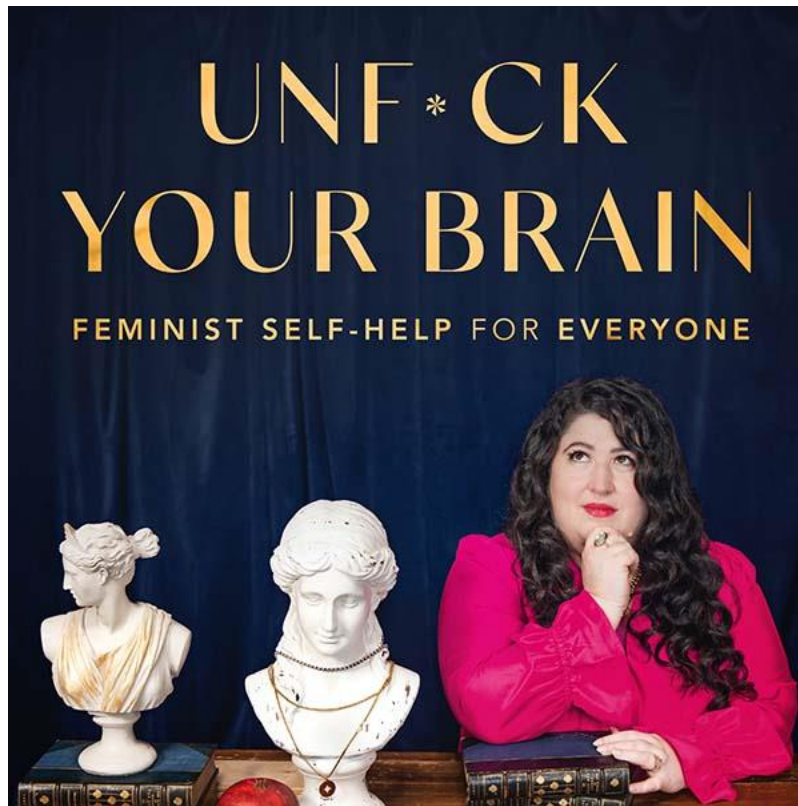


# UFYB 359: Over-Responsibility: The Spin



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

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## UFYB 359: Over-Responsibility: The Spin

This may be the most important podcast episode I've ever released. Since the beginning of this podcast, over 350 episodes ago, I have been teaching and writing and thinking about how women's socialization impacts the way they live their lives. And I have explored this from so many angles, but I've never quite felt like I put my finger exactly on the through line that explains all of women's socialization and all of the negative impacts it has on us. But recently I had a breakthrough. I saw a new perspective, a new web connecting it all.

Understanding your socialization from this perspective is going to blow your mind. As soon as the shades fall from your eyes, you're going to see this phenomenon everywhere and it is going to explain so much. Even better, it's going to give you an actionable hook to start working on it. You do not want to miss this episode, and next week's episode.

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.

Okay, my friends, get ready for this episode, take notes. This is such a powerful concept and it can help you create such a powerful shift in your life because once you start to see this, you will not be able to stop seeing it everywhere in your life. On this podcast I've explored in depth, the different ways that socialization impacts women. And I've often talked about the central injury of patriarchal socialization as teaching women that their worth and value is not just inherent, instead that it depends on what other people think of them.

I think so much of what women experience stems from a belief that their self-worth is conditional rather than unconditional. It's an expression of our relationship with ourselves being conditional on living up to social

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expectations of us. So, we can only be nice to ourselves or accept ourselves if we live up to these social conditions, if we live up to the impossible standards society has programmed into our heads. And even when we do temporarily achieve them, we still don't feel good about ourselves.

And this is a really deep moral injury that society inflicts on women. And so much of feminist mindset work is teaching women how to create a relationship with themselves that is not conditional in this way. But today I want to talk about a new perspective on how this manifests in women's lives. It's a new angle on what it is that society teaches women to believe. So, I was coaching some of my students recently inside the Feminist Self-Help Society, which is my feminist coaching program, where you can work with me.

And it was one of these coaching calls where it turns out that everyone is on the same theme. Sometimes that just happens coincidentally, it's not that the topics are the same, but the coaching every person needs, happens to be on the same theme. And as I was coaching each one of them after the other, I started to see this thread running through what was going on. Each of them was feeling anxiety, guilt, shame or all three about something they were trying and failing to control that they could not control.

They were trying to take responsibility for so many things that were not their responsibility. And that is when I realized that the core pattern that shows up in every woman I have ever coached is over-responsibility. Society teaches women that they are responsible for everything. We believe we are responsible for our appearances and our bodies and that we should be able to diet or exercise or plastic surgery our way into looking a certain way into literally seeming not to age. Completely impossible.

We believe we are responsible for anything anyone else thinks or feels about us. If someone's mad at us, we did something wrong, we need to fix

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it. If someone thinks something negative about us, it's probably true and we need to convince them to think otherwise. If someone doesn't like us, we aren't good enough. We need to change to win them back or convince them to like us. Ironically, if someone does like us, we don't take responsibility for that. That's just luck or chance or them just being nice or them not really seeing how bad we are, but we take responsibility for all the bad stuff.

We believe that we're responsible for anything that happens to us and of course, we do. Think about the social discourse around something like sexual assault or domestic violence. What do we hear? What was she wearing? Why did she make him mad? Why didn't she leave? The woman is always being blamed. We believe we are responsible for anything that happens to anyone we love or don't even like.

If we make a mistake in how we parent, our kid's going to end up scarred for life and it will be all our fault. If our partner isn't showing up the way we want then we think it's our job to fix ourselves, be worthy enough to change them. Or it's our job to help them change or make them change or change them somehow with our minds. We believe we are responsible for outcomes we are only one small part of. If we're a lawyer, we believe we're responsible for the entire outcome of a case, even though there's the judge, the jury, the other lawyers, our own clients, not to mention the facts and the law.

If we're a doctor, we believe we are responsible for our clients' entire health outcome, even though there are genetics and environment and patient priorities and patient compliance and other medical care providers and an entire culture influencing them. If we're on a group project at work, we believe we are responsible for the entire outcome and that it determines our future, even if many other people are part of the execution. We believe we're responsible for everyone else's emotions. If someone feels bad, we need to cheer them up and make them feel good.

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If someone has a negative feeling, especially about us, we need to solve it immediately. We think we're responsible for insulating everyone around us from the human experience of having negative emotions sometimes because we take any negative emotion in anyone close to us as an indictment of how well we do our job of making them happy. We believe we are responsible for everything.

And some of us find that illusion of control invigorating. We like believing we can control everything and we get a lot accomplished that way. But then we have a very hard time when we encounter something we can't control. We want to be responsible for how everyone else behaves and how everything turns out and when it doesn't work, we get angry or controlling and micromanage everyone. On the other hand, some of us believe we're supposed to be responsible for everything, but we don't feel capable of being responsible for everything.

So instead of being controlling, we feel overwhelmed and helpless because there's too much we're supposed to be managing so we just shut down and we don't manage anything including our own minds and our own lives. And then some of us are managing to keep all the plates spinning but if even one comes crashing down, the whole pile is going to collapse. We can't get sick. Our kids can't get sick. We can't take a vacation. We can't have anything go off track at all or we'll never catch up.

And it's not just that society expects us to be responsible for all this. Society also praises us for trying to be responsible for all of this. We get praised for being selfless. Think about how many women were praised at their funerals for being selfless mothers who always put their children's needs and happiness above their own. The best thing a woman can be is basically not there. We get praise for always putting other people first, not just their needs, but their desires, their inclinations, even just their whims and preferences.

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We're taught that a good wife is a woman who sublimates her desires or needs to her husband's. That's not what we consider a good husband. If you think about it, if you reverse the genders, it doesn't work. Women are considered good workers if they keep their head down and are team players and don't seem to care too much about their own success. Women are good teachers if they are understanding and always over-provide for their students and do emotional labor for them.

Women are good homemakers if their houses look like a perfect Instagram tutorial at all times. Even the inside of the fridge has to look artistic these days. And they need to keep that up even with other humans and pets living in their homes who aren't doing anything. If you're in a heterosexual partnership and family, no one judges the man if the house is messy, they assume that it's the woman's fault.

Women are encouraged to over-function for everyone around them, we are praised for it and taught into it. And what is the result? We are fucking exhausted. Yes, there's physical exhaustion from some of this, plus just the stressors of daily life. But even more than that is the emotional exhaustion, because being over-responsible for everything in your life means your brain can never rest. There's always more you could be doing, because after all, you're responsible for everything and everyone.

It's like your brain is constantly spinning with to-do lists and reminders and concerns. And then your brain also wants to make sure that you think about how you said something stupid last week in a meeting and you're failing as a romantic partner and you really meant to get that yoga routine going since you bought that 30 day pass and now you've wasted the money and you only lasted two days on keto this time. And on and on and on.

If you've ever learned how to navigate with a compass, you know that a magnet will disrupt a compass because the compass operates based on the Earth's magnetic poles. But if you're in another magnetic field of some

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kind, it will make the compass just spin and spin, it can't get its bearing. That's what your brain is like when it is magnetized by over-responsibility. Like a magnetic field, societal messaging surrounds you and it sets your brain spinning. It feels impossible to get a hold of everything you need to do, and everyone you need to become, and it also feels impossible to prioritize or let anything go.

When you subconsciously or consciously believe you're responsible for everything, you are in a constant state of brain spin, because there is always something happening somewhere for which you could hold yourself responsible. And you're never able to satisfy all of those conflicting social standards you've learned all at once all the time. So, the spin goes on and on and it's exhausting. The spin keeps us from actually knowing what matters to us and why, because we can't access our intuition, our knowing, or our true gifts and talents while we are trying to fit the mold.

And also, we're actually trying to fit 12 molds that contradict each other. The spin keeps us from actually experiencing true intimacy and being known and loved because we are always performing and trying to control everyone around us. The spin keeps us running around in circles trying to make everyone else happy, most of all, trying to please the internalized social voice in our brain that never rests. The spin distracts us from creating the lives we really want, the kind of lives that we will be proud of and satisfied with when we die.

At the end of your life, you will never think to yourself, I'm so glad I wore myself out trying to be society's perfect woman, which was never even possible, and that I sacrificed my own health, sanity and happiness in the process. But the spin distracts and confuses you until it's too late. Over-responsibility is a dream stealer, it is a life force sucker, it is a potential drainer.



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So, this week I want you to just start noticing how much and how often over-responsibility shows up in your thoughts and in your life. And next week I'm going to be back to talk to you more about how you can start to change it.

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](http://www.unfuckyourbrain.com/society). I can't wait to see you there.