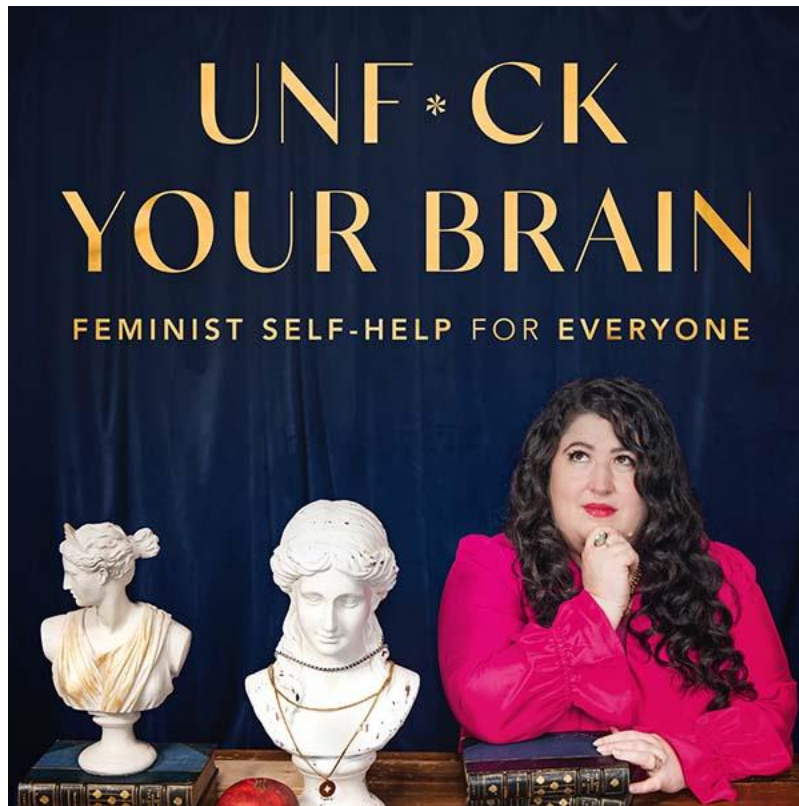# UFYB 360: Self-Responsibility: The Cure

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil

UFYB 360: Self-Responsibility: The Cure

In last week's episode I taught you about over-responsibility and how women are socialized to hold themselves responsible for everyone and everything around them. Today we're going to talk about the antidote to over-responsibility. It's not moving to a hut in the woods, although I personally would love to spend more time in a cabin. And it doesn't require you to be an asshole who only cares about yourself either.

In this episode I'm going to explain why self-responsibility is the answer. I'll explain what that means and why it will improve not just your life, but the lives of everyone around you too.

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.

You know that feeling where your brain starts to worry about one thing going wrong and then it quickly spirals into a catastrophic panic about everything that could go wrong after that one thing goes wrong? Maybe you started with worrying about whether you're about to get sick before a big presentation at work, but you end up imagining yourself living in a van under a bridge like the old SNL sketch goes.

Or you're trying to decide where to send your kid to school, and you imagine that if you make the wrong decision, she'll end up feeling rejected or get bullied. And she'll descend into a life of drugs and dropping out of high school and never achieve her potential and it will be all your fault. This can feel like it's just something your brain does, you were just born with an anxious brain. You likely know on some level that you're being irrational and that a lot of these outcomes are not likely to happen, but you still can't stop worrying about it.

UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil

UFYB 360: Self-Responsibility: The Cure

And you can't stop taking responsibility for everything that ever happens, not only to you, but to anyone or anything you even interact with, everyone else's feelings, everyone else's outcomes. So, no wonder you're exhausted.

In last week's episode, we did a deep dive on how society teaches women to take this over-responsibility and on the impact it has in our lives. So, if you haven't listened to that, go back now and listen, because it's really important for you to be able to start spotting where and how this is showing up in your life.

But in this episode I want to talk about the antidote to over-responsibility, because the paradox of over responsibility is that it means we're holding ourselves overly responsible for things we can't control. But we're holding ourselves under-responsible for ourselves and our own lives. I know that sounds strange because I just said that women take too much responsibility. And we often hold ourselves to blame for not doing everything perfectly.

But when you believe you are responsible for everything, you actually end up being truly responsible for nothing because you have no distinction between what is actually within your locus of control and what is not. You have collapsed the distinctions between these things, and you're trying to control everything and everyone or feeling guilty and ashamed when you can't.

Think about what happens when you're multitasking. You're switching between 12 different tasks and you're not really focusing on any of them, and it feels productive, but we know that feeling is a lie. Studies have shown it is objectively less productive to do that than to focus on one thing at a time. And you lose time and momentum on a task each time you switch your focus to a new one. Trying to be responsible for everything and everyone around you is similar.

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

UFYB 360: Self-Responsibility: The Cure

It feels like you're in control and managing and handling everything, but actually you're spending tons of energy pretending to yourself that you can control things you can't control. And that means you are by definition not spending your energy controlling what you can control, which is yourself. I don't love the word control. It sometimes has this kind of authoritarian vibe that I don't love.

So, when I say control, I don't mean you aren't ruling yourself with the iron fist of discipline. I mean that you are focusing on trying to manage and direct what everyone else feels and what happens to everyone else. And that means that you are not focusing on managing and relating to and improving what you feel and what happens to you. And then you don't end up showing up the way you want to show up in the first place.

We tell ourselves that we're doing this all for the benefit of other people around us. But when we are thinking and feeling and acting this way, we actually don't end up showing up in a way that is supportive or helpful or aligned with our values a lot of the time. I fell into this trap myself recently where I didn't tell the truth about something that I didn't want to do, and I will tell you what happened right after this.

So, I recently found myself taking over-responsibility for someone else's feelings. I agreed to do something I didn't want to do because I didn't want the person who asked me to do it, to think that I was being selfish or uncooperative. But then I was so resentful about doing it, and I so did not want to do it, that I ended up acting really pissy about it, which started to kind of ruin the outing anyway. I am sure many of you can identify with this behavior pattern. It happens to the best of us.

But because I know about over-responsibility, I was able to spot it as soon as it started happening. And I was able to shift how I was thinking and feeling and showing up. I didn't catch it right before I did it, but as soon as I started to feel that telltale resentment of over-responsibility, that I was able

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

to stop, tell the truth about what was going on. And we were able to adapt our plans to work better for both of us. That is not something that I knew how to do 10 years ago.

It's something so many women struggle with because we are taking over-responsibility for everyone and everything around us. And that means we are not taking self-responsibility. We are overextended and over-hustling and ignoring how we actually feel and ignoring what we actually want and need. If what you want is to enjoy your life and have time for hobbies and your family, it's not actually being responsible for yourself to say yes to a million things you don't want to do and burn yourself out in the process.

If what you truly want is an equal partnership and kids who can contribute to a home. You're not being responsible for yourself when you constantly pick up the slack, pick up the toys, do the dishes, plan the trips and over-function, and take over-responsibility for everyone else in your household.

If what you want is good health, it's not actually being responsible to yourself to keep pushing off doctors' appointments or skipping workouts because other people in the family need a ride or your boss needs a quick project update. Being over-responsible for others is what society tells you will get you love, acceptance and safety. But what it actually gets you is being taken for granted, being burnt out and feeling exhausted. And what's worse, you don't feel safe.

Society tells you that if you just take responsibility for everything all the time, everywhere, forever and ever, amen, you'll feel safe. But actually, you feel unsafe because you're constantly hustling for your worth, trying to control everything around you and you're one dropped ball away from feeling self-loathing and despair and blaming yourself for everything that has gone wrong. Over-responsibility for things that you can't actually control, or rather, the illusion of over-responsibility for things you can't actually control, makes you under-responsible for the things that you can.

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

UFYB 360: Self-Responsibility: The Cure

Chances are that you are taking over-responsibility for other people and circumstances in at least one area of your life, and probably a lot more. And that in those areas you are taking under-responsibility for yourself. Self-responsibility requires taking a good hard look at the thoughts that are motivating the way you behave. It means admitting all the ways you try to control things that are outside of your control and the fears and insecurities that drive you to do this. And it means learning how to change your thinking so that you take responsibility where it's appropriate, but not where it's not.

So, the next time you feel tempted to be over-responsible for something or someone, ask yourself, is this really something I can control? Am I actually responsible for this? Why do I think I'm responsible for this? In focusing on this, am I being responsible to myself? What is the impact on those around me when I try to be over-responsible in this way, and what is the impact on myself when I do that? The answer to this may surprise you, if you ask these questions of yourself consistently and answer honestly, it will really start to change your perspective on what you should and should not take responsibility for.

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.

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