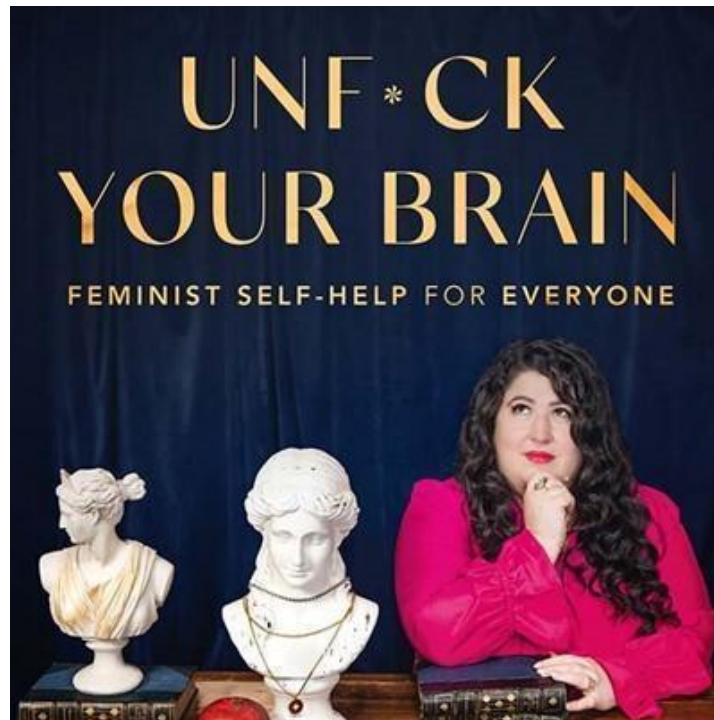


UFYB 46: Listener Q & A Vol. 2



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

[UnF*ck Your Brain](#) with 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, chickens. So today is chicken question and answer. I got a lot of feedback from you guys that you loved the last Q&A and it was really helpful to hear the concrete questions, and then I got a whole flood of new questions. So I'm going to do some more of these.

I have a couple of things I want to say first. So number one, when in doubt, the answer is your thoughts cause your feelings. Like, I totally understand what this is like because I used to do this to my teacher, but a lot of the questions I get are like, okay, yeah, yeah, my thoughts cause my feelings but how do I stop feeling this way in this circumstance. Like, change your thoughts. There's no exception. You can't break The Model. I used to try to tell my teacher all the time, "I broke The Model, this thought doesn't cause my feeling."

It does. It's your thoughts. Always your thoughts. So when in doubt, if you ask me a question that like, I don't get or I'm not able to answer, if you listen to the podcast, you already have everything you need to know to solve your problem. You just aren't believing or accepting that the teaching applies to this current situation. So if you ask yourself a powerful question like, well, how does what I've learned apply to this? You'll get farther. That's number one.

Number two, this is so interesting. So I was thinking about questions and answers and kind of all of you guys out there applying the work and I'm going to teach at my teacher's training and I was thinking about my relationship with my teacher, and I got this message - one of you was really mad. Probably she's not listening anymore that I made a joke on one of my

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Instagram stories she didn't like. And so she said she's going to unfollow me and I was like, okay. Like, feel free.

But I think it's interesting to think about. To me that's like, "Well, I'm going to be really mean to this person so they know I'm mad at them." Who does that hurt? It doesn't teach me a lesson that she unfollowed me. What it does do is deprive her of a lot of teaching that she apparently was finding helpful since she was listening to the podcast and following me, right? And I think about this with my teacher so you guys may not know this but my teacher, Brooke Castillo, started as a weight loss coach and still trains a lot of weight loss coaches, and a lot of my coach friends are weight loss coaches, which is wild, right? Because I'm a body positive coach and I teach what I believe to be the science that like, long-term intentional weight loss usually doesn't work and dieting causes weight gain and all the other stuff that I teach. I'm not a weight loss coach, and in some ways weight loss coaching is really anathema to what I do.

And so when I was deciding whether to work with my teacher and train with her, I really had to think about that, right? Like, okay, well, this person has this big - not just a joke on Instagram - this person has this big part of her work that like, I don't agree with both kind of factually and also kind of ideologically and value wise, and what am I going to do about that. And I really had to coach myself over it but what I ultimately decided was like, she's going to be teaching about weight loss regardless, right? Me not following her and not going to her training is not going to change any of that.

And I am learning so much in all these other areas, so what if I just allowed her to in my eyes, be wrong about it, and in her eyes I'm wrong about it and that's totally fine. We love each other and we like, know that about each other and there's no problem in our relationship because of it, which is such a testament to coaching I think for both of us, to both of our self-coaching. And so it just really struck me that this person's reaction was like, "I don't

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like something you did so even though I'm learning a lot from you and I'm like, following you for that reason, now I'm going to stop to teach you a lesson, to strike back at you for this joke I don't like.”

But what's the cost to her of not getting the learning? And I think like, the fact that I am surrounded by weight loss coaches all the time and I'm friends with many of them and I allow them to be who they are and teach what they teach, which they're going to do anyway, right? Now, some people would say that that's like, I'm being a sellout and I should be standing up to the diet industrial complex and like, it's complicit of me, and I just think like, no, it's coaching. These people believe what they believe and allowing them to be themselves and it's so much more valuable to me to have worked through my own reaction to that.

Like, maybe that's really the part of this that is striking to me is like, if I had just been like, fuck it, no, I'm never going to learn from this woman, I'm not going to talk to any of these people, I don't want to be around any weight loss talk, it's too triggering for me, I would never have worked through all of my thoughts and feelings about my own weight, about weight loss, about dieting, about all of this shit. And here's the truth: I am stronger in my commitments, I am stronger in my values, I am stronger in my beliefs and I'm stronger as a teacher because I allowed myself to be exposed to all of that.

Because I didn't just say I'm triggered and that's your fault and you caused my feelings and so I'm going to hide myself. Because I was willing to be uncomfortable and be in places where I really had to like, in the beginning I had to be really self-coaching myself during training something to be like, okay, you're allowed to believe what you believe, you don't have to take this on, you don't have to think this way. But that was so valuable. And not just because I have relationships that matter to me and coaching colleagues who matter to me and not only because I've been able to see like, how

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even my weight loss colleagues do a ton of work around thoughts and feelings and emotional eating and a lot of stuff that I teach too.

But also because I went through the fire and I came out the other side so much more sort of rooted in my own beliefs and so much more able to allow other people to be who they are. And that has made me a stronger leader, and now I have a podcast with a million downloads where I teach what I believe. And I have reached so many more people.

I think that this is coming up for me in the context of the Q&A podcast because I got so many emails where the question was just yelling at me about not thinking other people are toxic. That one just like, really set you guys off a lot, which I understand. But I think that that's why I want to share this with you right now is like, I just want to invite you to think about how you want to respond when someone says something you don't agree with. And what do you really think is in your own best interests? It's not about them. It's not about teaching them or rewarding them or punishing them. You can't control them, you can't control me, right?

You writing me emails that you're mad at me, which you're totally welcome to do doesn't punish me. It doesn't change my beliefs, right? So we all have this default to try to like, kind of - it's the cut off your noses to spite your face thing, right? Like, I'm going to teach them a lesson. I'm not going to be around this because I don't want to control my thoughts and feelings about it and I want to show them that they're wrong. But it doesn't show them that they're wrong. And what do you lose out?

So that's a long introduction, but that has just been on my mind while I was getting ready for this podcast so I wanted to share it with you guys. Alright, let's do some questions. Okay, "Hi Kara, I listened to the Q&A podcast. Today I have a question that keeps popping up in my head. As you say other people are not responsible for my feelings, and I get that but I'm still trying to please everybody else." Alright, well 95% of you could have written

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me this one. "Like, I don't want to bother people or make them mad or upset so I always try to make others feel comfortable with putting me last and it bothers me sometimes. I want to change it but at the same time I ask myself, in what kind of world or society would we live if everybody would only care about themselves. I hope you get what I'm trying to say. I love your podcast, I listen to it from Germany."

Alright, hello listener in Germany. So here's the thing: you can't please other people because you don't cause their thoughts and feelings. So this question like, what society would we live in if everybody only cared about themselves, it implies that if you stop trying to control other people's thoughts and feelings, you will make the world worse. And I think it's the exact opposite. When you stop trying to control everybody else's thoughts and feelings and you actually deal with your own, you create yourself as a person - you become a person who has way more compassion, way more energy, actually for other people and is way more able to offer and be of service to other people.

Because you're no longer trying to control them and you're not making it mean anything about you. Right now, all this shit is about you. This isn't about them. You're not trying to please them to make them happy. You're trying to please them because you don't want to think bad thoughts about yourself if you don't. That's what's self-absorbed. And I don't mean that in a moral way. You're not a bad person but I talk about this all the time. Self-loathing, self-criticism, people pleasing is way more self-absorbed than self-love.

Because it's all about trying to control other people so you can think a certain way and feel a certain way about yourself. It has nothing to do with them. So I think it would be an amazing world if everybody loved themselves, did what they felt made the most sense to them and acted the way they wanted to act and we're operating at all times out of love for themselves and love for others as opposed to trying to manage other

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people's minds and control them so they can feel okay about themselves. That's not loving others. That's trying to control them for your own needs. That's using them as emotional vending machines. So I think it would be a beautiful world and I think we should try to find out.

Okay. "Hi Kara, I'm sure you get this all the time but I'll say it anyway. I love your podcast, you're a rock star from my perspective and I'm incredibly grateful for all the tools you've provided to your listeners thus far. I'm working towards bettering my self-esteem, decluttering my thoughts, but it's kind of hard." No kidding. "I recently left a five-year relationship, I'm dating someone new, and there's so much going on, calming my mind down is hard, it's taking a toll on my personal relationship with this new guy. I really like him but the relationship before him ended because my partner cheated on me. So trusting is really hard for me and while I want to keep seeing him, I'm also really scared and I'm sending him a lot of mixed messages. Sometimes I behave very attached, other times I disappear on him and behave distantly. It's tough because I don't know what the hell I'm doing. Do you think it's okay to tell him that?"

Yeah, fuck yeah. I think you should tell him what you're doing and why for sure. I mean, honest communication always. I do think you need to work on your mind about this because the reason you're doing this is that you're mentally giving this guy the power to hurt you. You're like, oh this last guy cheated on me, that hurt me, I'm having a hard time trusting. It is impossible to trust that someone else won't hurt you because someone else never can hurt you because it's your own thoughts.

So what you're telling yourself is like, "I need to trust that I will never ever myself have a thought and reaction to this person that hurts my own feelings." It's impossible to do it that way. So the reason that you're going hot and cold on him I suspect is that you are telling yourself that he has the power to make you happy or to hurt you and so you're vacillating between love and fear. And you need to take emotional responsibility for your own

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feelings. Like, if he cheats on you, you still get to decide what to think and feel. You still create your own feelings.

So you need to work on that but I would absolutely tell him. I mean, it's up to you but I don't think there's any reason not to tell him what's going on with you. I always like to communicate. I tell my partner all the time, like, hold on, I'm having a minute, I need to coach myself.

Okay. Someone else asked, "How can I not be the victim of your parents or childhood?" Well, that is obviously a huge question but that answer is always you have to change your thoughts. So you have a story about why your parents and childhood are to blame. You think they were bad, it went wrong, shouldn't have been that way, they should have been different, and they're to blame for your current situation. And so the first thing to really recognize is that you are only impacted now as much as you are thinking the same thoughts about your childhood.

So whatever your current thoughts are about your parents or your childhood, that's where you need to start. Just get all those down on paper, write your story, and start working on those. I recommend trying to write down your whole negative story and then try to write a neutral story where you take out a lot of the judgment and blame and negative kind of adjectives. Just start with that. Try to write it in a neutral sense and see what thinking about it that way feels like.

Alright. "Hi Kara, I'm being harassed by someone at work who threw things at me to get my attention, bad talked his wife to me, made up a weird nickname for my husband. And so I got him written up at work and then he told me he's autistic and that means he can't tell when I'm serious or joking. And now I feel 100% worse than when I 'turned him in' for harassment. How do I move past this with thought work and how do I stop feeling like a shitty person who turned around a work BFF into the boss for harassment? He seemed completely fine and understanding about it and we're still

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friends, yet I feel incredibly guilty. Note, I was sexually attacked by my boss - different boss, different workplace - a few years ago. Still blame myself. Started out very similarly."

Okay, so as you say like, he's fine. He doesn't seem upset about it. But you are making yourself feel guilty, so you need to figure out what those thoughts are. Like, the way you use thought work to get past this is you do a thought download and you see what your thoughts are that are making you feel guilty and then you got to work on shifting those. It's like, pro tip, you guys, the answer is always write down your thoughts. Work on shifting them.

I think, you know, piecing together what you wrote here, it sounds to me like maybe one of the reasons that you felt so strongly about what this guy was doing was that you were thinking, "Oh, this is just how it started last time, now he's going to sexually attack me." So it's possible that you built it up into this big danger in your head, you reported him, now that you have this alternate explanation, you sort of feel guilty and think you overreacted. So you need to work through all that and really differentiate the situation from the last one. Then you also need to work on some thoughts about forgiving yourself.

Like, does it matter that he told you there's this condition? If the behavior is harassing to you, if the behavior is interfering with you getting your work done, if the behavior is not appropriate for a work place, it doesn't cause your feelings but you still might have wanted to say like, listen, somebody needs to explain to him that, you know, for me like, somebody throwing things at me at work would totally be something I would talk to HR about. It doesn't cause my feelings, but that's just a physical boundary for me is like, don't throw things at me. And if somebody won't stop, I would definitely talk to HR about it.

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So you're making it a moral issue and you need to kind of tease out why you're choosing to believe that the fact that he has a diagnosis of autism that he says is related to this is suddenly making you think about it in a totally different way. My guess is that you were freaking out about what you perceived as like, the intentionality of the behavior and relating it to your past experience with your past boss, and so you need to untangle that.

Okay. Next question. "Hi Kara, I love the Q&A podcast. Here's my question. I have a condition named visual snow. I've had this for the last six years. One day I just woke up like this. I've managed to manage my brain about it although it takes a lot of effort as it is present 24/7. I have learned to embrace it but when I am tired and stressed it is so easy to go on autopilot mode and it gets worse. Any tips on how to keep up with the constant thought work?"

So I'm going to do an episode about chronic illness and kind of pain at some point, but I just like to think of it as like, there's the - so when I was coaching people who worked in law firms all the time, I mean, I still have lawyer clients, but when that was all I did, I did a lot of work with women who would be like, "Oh, well I have like, my eating and my exercise and my lifestyle down when things are busy, but then when things are busy it all goes to hell because I can't do it perfectly."

And so we worked a lot on having like, a two-tier approach. Like, well here's what I do when work is fine and then here's my minimum baseline that I do when work is crazy. So I don't have to like, negotiate and freak out about it, I don't have to go to zero. I just know, oh, things are really busy, now this is my routine.

And I think that that can be true with thought work also. It's like, okay, when I'm feeling up to it, this is the level of thought work I want to do about this. When I'm having a really physically exhausting or draining day because of my illness or my symptoms or whatever, this is the level of thought work I'm

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going to do. And for me, that usually means I just go back to like, total practicing acceptance of reality, right? So often I'm doing positive thought work, I just go back to neutral. This is how this feels right now, this is the sensation in my body. This is my body right now, right? Nothing has gone wrong, this is just what is.

So that is what I would recommend. Like, just have a kind of minimum baseline you go back to of like, this is what my visual sense are right now. This is what is happening. Nothing has gone wrong, this is just what it is. So that's my recommendation for that.

Okay. "Hi Kara, I love the Q&A. I actually have a question that maybe others can relate to." I'm sure that's true. "I'm having trouble not reacting so emotionally to some of my friends. I have great friends and I like to catch up with them regularly because I enjoy it and I think I emotionally depend on it a little bit. I'm trying not to be so emotional about some friends who never initiate catch-ups or only do when they are in a crisis. I understand they aren't affecting my emotions, only my thoughts. I find it hard to find the line of when I'm just overthinking things or when I really should stop trying to put so much effort into the friendship."

Okay, well you can't find that line because it doesn't exist. That's just not a thing. There's no such thing as when you really should stop trying to put effort into a friendship. That is not an objective determination anyway. You just have to decide. If you enjoy time with these friends when you initiate it and they respond yes and you hang out and you enjoy it, then you get to decide if you want to sacrifice that just because they're not initiating. This is kind of like what I was talking about in the beginning of the podcast actually. It all comes back together.

I have friends where I'm the one who always initiates. Now, I have a choice. I can make that mean something about myself, about what they think about me, about whether I'm good enough, about whether I'm valued, which is all

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about my own thoughts about myself, and I can stop hanging out with them and deprive myself of the enjoyment to like, what, prove a lesson to them? Right? Or I can be like, oh right, my worth has nothing to do with who texts about hanging out and I enjoy this so I'm going to keep doing it.

So your problem is that you're making it mean something about yourself and about your value as opposed to just, oh, these particular friends just never initiate and that's fine. It's just like they have blonde hair and they don't text first. But I enjoy it when we hang out, that's a benefit to my life so why wouldn't I want to keep doing that?

Okay. Next question. "Hi Kara. My question is how do you manage being single and not having sex when everyone around you is doing the opposite?"

Okay, so again, that is a very big question but the answer is manage your mind. You are making being single and not having sex mean something about you, right? And you're making it mean probably that you're not good enough, you're not attractive enough, you're not worthy enough, there's something wrong with you, you'll never be happy. You've got to figure out what your particular version of it that you're making it mean is and then you have to work on shifting those thoughts, right?

Any time that a circumstance seems to be bothering you, the circumstance is some people - first of all, it's definitely not true that everyone around you is doing the opposite. That's a thought. Your circumstance is like, you know some people who are married and you are single. Or you know some people having sex and you are not. That's a circumstance. You've got to figure out then what are you making that mean about you, and that's what you have to work on.

The truth is if you really wanted to be in a relationship more than anything else or you really wanted to have sex more than anything else, more than

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any standards you have, more than any criteria you have, more than any other goals you have, you would be. You really would be if that was your only goal in life.

So you need to work through the kind of shame and self-worth stuff and then you got to figure out, well, is it my priority? How much do I care about it and what am I willing to do to make it happen rather than just sitting around making it mean something about yourself. Your marital or sexual status is not a reflection of your worth or appeal. It's a reflection of how seriously you're taking the project of trying to get this thing. Most of us just sit around feeling bad about ourselves instead.

Okay. We're really - we're steaming through these. It might have to be two episodes, you guys, there's so many questions. Okay. "Hi Kara, I'd love your help. So I had a traumatic work experience five years ago. My company relocated me for my dream job and hired my boss and I together. I got pregnant. For a year I trusted her, I did well for the company, I invited her to my baby shower and I thought my life was amazing. When I got back from maternity leave, she put me on performance probation and wrote pages of horrific and even personal things against me. Mortified and betrayed, I continued showing up to work because my husband basically made me. She used things against me, offered cookies to my replacement in front of me and got partners involved to make me appear crazy to add it to her review. Mean girls worst-case scenario. I was hiding in conference rooms and suicidal. How could I be so wrong, so dumb, so naïve? Other girls also turned their backs on me including one I was mentoring. I felt like the worst employee, this career is suicide, I'm a horrible mom. No one reached out to me when I finally left two months later and I continued to follow the girls I worked with on social media only to see them take credit for my work and win Emmy awards. My boss I now know was a narcissist witch. But the entire process was so painful. It's been five years, I think about it a lot. Everyone else has seemed to stay and love their lives

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working there. I was employee zero and felt destroyed. How do I get past this five years later if I'm still feeling obsessed?"

Alright, my love. There's no such thing as a narcissist witch. You are in 100% victim mode about this, right? You have given everyone else all of the power. You are taking everything extremely personally, you are interpreting everyone else's behavior to be against you. You've even got your husband in the mix. Your boss is the monster, your husband made you do it, the girls were mean to you, you were turned against, it was horrific, it was personal, your husband made you do things, they turned their backs on you, you're so, so in victim mode about this story and of course you're going to feel obsessed about it.

There's literally no way for you to believe that everyone did you wrong and ruined your life and not be obsessed with it. So you have to decide how committed you are to this story. How important is it to you that you be the victim in this story? That's a real question. You've got to decide.

If you want to feel differently, you will have to find another way to tell this story and you will have to be open to the idea that you are not the victim of all these people. That's the only way that this is going to change for you. If you keep telling yourself a story that all these people conspired to ruin your life, of course, how could you not be obsessed with it? So there's no silver lining it. You can't believe that your boss was a narcissist witch who was out to get you, that the mean girls all turned on you, that your husband made you do it, that nobody cared if you lived or died, and then try to feel good about that, right? That doesn't work.

You have to decide whether you are open to telling yourself a different story and whether you're willing to see that all of this is your interpretation, your optional thoughts about what happened and that there might be other ways of thinking about what happened. And I would suggest you do the same exercise I suggested to the person about their childhood, which is you've

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already got the story the way you normally write it right here and then write it completely neutral. No adjectives, no interpretation, no evaluation. Just literally only the facts and see how it feels to even just think about it that way.

Okay, let's do one more and then we'll do a third episode of these because we got a lot more. "Question for listener Q&A podcast. This week, I've been acting up in my role as my boss is on leave. I've had more direct" - that's funny, I read that as acting out like a toddler's acting out but no. She means like, she's managing up, she's doing more stuff. "I've had more direct contact with the CEO and other senior leaders in the company. My lizard brain is flipping out and turning normal tasks into scary, overwhelming tasks all because I have a new opportunity to show my work to senior people. Obviously, I want to make a good impression and be seen in a good light and as a competent lawyer. How can I tame lizard brain so I can get on with my work without all the drama in my head and subsequent chest tightening and clenched jaw, my go-to body responses when anxious? Thank you and love your work."

Okay. So you got to figure out what you're making this mean, right? So you're flipping out because you are now putting all of this new weight on your normal tasks. And so that's where you need to start. You need to really look at what those thoughts are, what kind of weight you're putting on the normal tasks, why you're making them so important right now, and then work on some neutral thoughts that you can practice like - you know, I don't know what the tasks are but let's say one of the tasks is like, writing a brief.

So you could practice some kind of neutral thought like, I've written a million briefs before. This isn't like - writing a brief is just the same thing no matter who's looking at it. Whatever's going to work for you, I don't know the specifics of the situation, we need to know what your specific thoughts are about the consequences, but what's going on is that you have put too much pressure and weight on this, showing your work to senior people and

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making a good impression, so you're trying to control their brain so then now you're freaking out.

But you can't control what they think about you. All you can control is how you show up and so that's where you need to shift the focus of your thoughts. Not make a good impression and make them think something, but how do I want to show up what I need to do to do that.

Okay, here's a perfect ending one so one more. "Hi Kara, I love your podcast. My Q&A question. What's the first thing you do each morning to kick-start your day and the last thing you do at night before you sleep?"

So this is the part where I'm supposed to say, well in the morning I meditate for three hours and then I drink a green juice that's been left out in the moon to charge - whatever, I don't know. Not making fun of people who charge their crystals in the moon or drink green juice. I just think like, as a coach, I'm supposed to have some - people think I must have some sort of like, deeply involved self-care ritual. No. One important thing I do is something I don't do, which is that I don't sleep with my phone in my room. So my phone stays in the living room. Doesn't come in the bedroom. So when I wake up I can't just immediately grab it and look at emails before I'm even conscious.

So I recommend all of you do that. What I don't do in the morning to kick-start my day is look at my phone. Generally, I have coffee if I'm - like, when I'm traveling and staying somewhere that has an outside I like to drink my iced coffee outside and just look at nature for a little bit. In New York, that's less plausible so I usually - I make ice coffee and often I pet the cat in the morning, that's our little hang out time. And I've gone through phases where I read something before I look at my phone and then sometimes I'll check my social media but even just that like, 10-minute gap where I get up and I get out of bed without looking at the phone and I get the coffee and sort of get myself centered, take my vitamins is useful.

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Before I go to sleep I actually have always been blessed as a really solid sleeper so even when I was a super anxious wreck all the time I could always sleep. That was like, one of my escapes, so I don't really have a nighttime ritual either. I'm sorry, I know you guys wanted like, an amazing self-care ritual that you could put in the pages of Self magazine but I don't have one. I brush my teeth and I wash my face and I like, sometimes remember to put lotion on and then I pass out.

That's what happens. So sorry that's not more exciting but listen, we got a million downloads because we're authentic and we keep it real. I'm going to stop talking about that but I'm recording this the same day I recorded last week's podcast about the giveaway so it's on my mind.

Alright my loves, we still have a lot of questions here so I'm going to record one more of these and we'll like, release that sometime in the next month or two. So if I didn't get to your question, it's coming. Just not right away. Okay, talk to you guys next week.

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