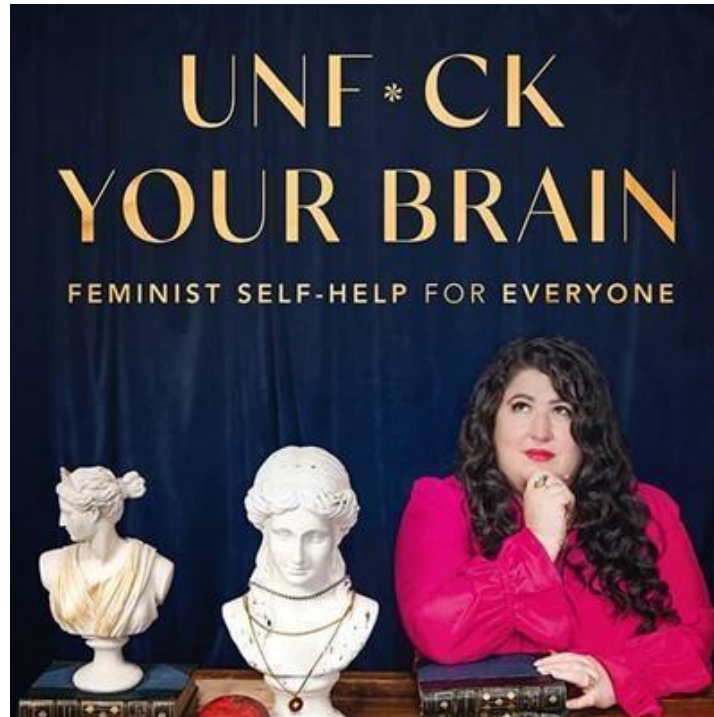


**UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White  
Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media:  
A Conversation with Isa Watson**



**Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

**Kara Loewentheil**

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## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

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. I am so excited. I say this every time but every time I truly mean it. Every time I'm very excited for this conversation because I only have exciting people on my podcast that I want to talk to, that I want you to hear from. So today I am talking to Isa Watson and I am going to give a quick introduction of her but she is a myriad of amazing things that I cannot fit in a short introduction so I'll also let her tell us more. But Isa is an expert in the human connections space. She has been named one of Inc's 30 Under 30 as well as a top 100 female entrepreneur of 2020.

And is one of the 100 MIT alumni in tech in 2021. Has a BS in chemistry and a minor in mathematics from Hampton University and an MS in pharmacology from Cornell University. And she's the founder of Squad, an audio based social app that aims to help users deepen relationships with their preexisting circle of close friends while putting mental health first. And we might get to talk about social media but we're going to talk first about a lot of her professional experience kind of before she went in to founding her own thing. So, tell us a little bit about yourself and your work and then we will dive in.

Isa: Well, thank you so much, Kara for having me. And really excited to delve in. But the first thing I like to start with is a fun fact about me. I've never had a cup of coffee in my life. So, the fact that I'm standing here today is very surprising to me still. But long story short I come from...

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

Kara: I am very shaken by this. I've heard a lot of things on the podcast but...

Isa: I've never had a cup of coffee in my life.

Kara: Amazing.

Isa: And I managed to make it to your podcast today.

Kara: Yeah, you're here and you've accomplished a lot without caffeine, it is possible.

Isa: So, I come from a big Caribbean family, one that was really, really values oriented. And I was always a builder. My father was an old school engineer who was more in the mindset of if you can't build it then you shouldn't be using it. So, I was building my computers at the age of seven onward.

Kara: If that was the rule I would literally use nothing in my house. I would maybe be toasting bread over an open flame in the backyard but I'm not even sure that I could build a fire.

Isa: I suck at building fires by the way, but I can build electronics. But the real world stuff, I struggle. But the way that the building manifested for me first was in the lab sciences field. So, I started my career as a chemist, started working at a research lab at UNC, Chapel Hill at 14 years old, was one of the youngest published chemists in the world at 19. I know we talk about mindset a lot here. And quite frankly, I have had pivots in my career which actually require a really strong and kind of resilient mindset.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

So, I actually transitioned from lab and data science to the world of Wall Street where I was the Vice President of Strategy at JPMorgan Chase, running multibillion dollar initiatives across three or four continents at a time. And then from JPMorgan I was like, “You know what? I’m really, really passionate about the fact that humans are lacking connection in the way that we do today.” And the fact that social media has driven more loneliness. So, I was like, “Let me go build a solution.” So, I left JPMorgan to start a venture capital backed technology company.

And so, between chemistry, finance and now tech, that’s kind of my professional story.

Kara: All without caffeine, it’s amazing. So, let’s talk a little bit about – you’ve worked in three very male driven industries. And I mean I think if we counted venture capital separately, it kind of would really be four, science, corporate banking, tech and then also venture capital is very male driven. And that’s where you’ve had to get your funding. So, I’d kind of love to hear what sort of mindset challenges you encountered in working in such male driven industries. Did you go into it with those concerns or were you kind of like this is fine? And then things came up, what was your sort of experience?

Isa: Yeah, you’re right in the fact that science, finance and tech are all very, very male driven. I think for me I didn’t go into it thinking, how am I going to have to navigate this differently? I just was like, let me learn the rules of the game. Let me optimize on my version of the rules and then let me actually play that back a little bit better than you. And one of the things that I found myself doing quite a bit and it started actually, yeah, it started with my science days.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

But really, really manifested it, built this muscle during my finance days was feeling comfortable inviting myself into the room, or inviting myself to the table. I felt like oftentimes women are not just going to be given the opportunity, here, come sit at this really important table where we're making big decisions. Or come into this room of some of the key players at the firm right now who are handling x, y and z. And so, for me I just, you know, people considered it to be a little bit awkward or uncomfortable at times.

But I was like, "Oh, actually, yeah, I should be in that meeting. Don't worry, I'll go tell your assistant to put it on my calendar."

Kara: I love this. This is so important because this is like women are socialized to wait to be rewarded for good behavior. And if you are a person of color, if you're marginalized in some other way, especially if you feel the pressure of being a model minority in some way. It's like work hard and you'll be rewarded. And so, we sit around waiting, what we are saying is so important which is you've got to reward yourself.

You've got to put yourself in the way of that, you can't just wait. And you have to be willing for it to be awkward. I mean I've been coaching a little around this so much lately that we all want to be trailblazers, or entrepreneurs, or the first woman of color VP of this. But then we're like, "But I don't want it to feel awkward. And I want it to be easy and smooth." And no, we can have a lot of those things. It can be easy and smooth and not awkward, and you cannot trailblaze, or you can trailblaze and be willing to be like, "Yeah, so I'll be in that meeting and I'll tell your assistant."

And I'm basically going to keep going till someone says no to me rather than wait for someone to say yes to me.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

Isa: 100%. And the thing about it is that any time you're navigating these environments there is an ecosystem you're navigating. So, it's not just – my first job at JPMorgan while I supported and was the righthand strategic partner for a lot of the C-Suite executives. One of my first jobs was supporting the CFO of a particular unit, running [inaudible] strategic initiatives. And I remember how much easier it became for me to actually navigate these when I became close with the assistants.

And when you're like at the Wall Street firms of the world, some of the major firms, the assistants actually run the show. And they're the ones who have all the tea. And so, it's like, that meeting, what day is it again? Oh yeah, and does Bob also attend? Great, you know what? I'm just going to tell her, I'm giving the heads up that I'm going to also attend and then I'll confirm with you so you can put it on for me. So, it was never actually sometimes going through the guys directly but I was that girl that showed up.

And I was like, "Hey, guys, I'm here. Yeah. Also, these are my ideas." And so, I think back to your point about it potentially being awkward, very much so. But I actually just had to accept the awkwardness and kind of lean into it. And quite frankly, most people aren't going to tell you, "No, actually, no, you can't be there." Because they don't want to be the bad guy. And so again, I think we have to be more comfortable with creating those opportunities for ourselves.

Kara: It's so good. It's like the person who's going to win is the person who is going to be the most awkward. They're not going to want to feel awkward by saying no. So, if you're willing to feel awkward by putting yourself there and then of course your ideas and all of that starts to take root. You start to be able to have those conversations. But I just love this story because it's such a – I feel like what you were kind of showcasing is that resilience and

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

creativity. And I'm going to get myself in the room and then of course my brilliance is going to speak for itself once I get there.

But how do I get there? I'm going to do what it takes as opposed to, okay, if I work really hard in this job exactly the way I was told to eventually somebody will recognize me and move me up. And that is just not – I mean maybe occasionally but you can't be going around relying on that and waiting for that.

Isa: I always tell people, you should never consider it somebody else's job to elevate you. You actually have to put yourself in those positions. And on top of that you have to communicate your worth and you have to communicate the things that you've accomplished. So hey, I just wanted to let you know that we actually went ahead and kicked off the initiative, we're on track to hit another \$500 million of revenue from this. And I'll keep you posted on how it turns out. And then six months later, "By the way, I just wanted to let you know, it's executed super well."

Give people credit like Bob was helpful here, Suzie was helpful here. And then after I started doing that the first few times then I started getting a bunch and they were like, "You've got to get Isa in here because that's the way it's going to get done. You've got to get Isa here."

Kara: You created your own reputation and you were your own hype person which I think is so important. I see this even in my company when people ask for – and I have as it turns out right now, all women working for me. And women from various marginalized identities. And I do, a lot of people ask for raises and promotions. I'm like, "Okay, go revise this. Do this again and come back and tell me, what is the value you added to the company? What did you work on? What did you, whatever?"

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

Because we're not taught how to do this in school, which we should be but you've got to come in and blow my mind with how much value you created and take ownership of what you've brought to the business. That's how I make these decisions. And that's how you want to be thinking about yourself and presenting yourself.

Isa: 100%, and make sure you're communicating that to the right person.

Kara: Yeah. And I just love that, proactively doing that even not even in the context of a raise discussion, or promotion discussion, whatever, but just Slacking somebody and being like, "Hey, I just wanted to let you know, that thing you told me to work on, it's going gangbusters and it's so great, and it's on track. And here's what we're doing", and blah, blah, blah. I think we all think, it comes from school where you're like, well, I do the homework and then I get the good grade. And the teacher's watching all of us. And it's their job but in business everybody's doing their own job.

Nobody has time to be hyper monitoring all of their employees. They worry about their own job and their own boss, so you have to do that.

Isa: 100%.

Kara: So good. So, I'd love to talk a little bit about something that we talk about on the podcast a lot which is there is the places where what's holding us back is internalized bullshit. And that's what we've been talking about so far. And then there's also the places where there's external bullshit. You are being treated differently because you're a woman or a person of color, or fat, or disabled, or whatever else is going on. There is sexism. There is racism.



## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

There is ableism especially in some behemoth corporate industries kind of that have been run a certain way for a long time. And mostly white men whose fathers and grandfathers also had the same jobs. So, whether or not you sort of personally encounter that and of course, you're welcome to share about it if you did. But how do you recommend that people, women especially, or marginalized people use mindset to kind of try to cope with some of those instances?

Isa: Yeah. I think it in part varies in how it comes up and what exactly it is. And I think sometimes when you're calling people out especially when you're calling a man out, as to not tap on their ego too much, I've kind of made jokes about it at certain points. Or I've had friends who have been clearly discriminated against when they were eight, seven months pregnant. And it's like, really, Bob, would you really be saying this to me if I didn't have this eight pound human in my stomach right now?

I think that you just have to literally kind of call it out. But kind of call it out in a way that sparks a conversation. And I think that there are other times where it's really tricky to do that. So, I had a white woman manager and I'm a Black female, very chocolatey Black female, I had a white woman manager one time tell me that it was hard to give me feedback because my face looked so aggressive. And I said, "You said what?" I don't even know how to respond to that. What am I supposed to do? Have my face look more like yours, change my skin tone?

Kara: Right. Just [inaudible] any time you speak to me to try to overcome the stereotype.

Isa: Right. It was basically Black women are aggressive. And so, I think for that I was like, "Okay, HR." And it was bad because I ended up calling my HR manager who was another white woman who didn't really address it.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

And I was like, “Okay, alright.” So, I didn’t even address that because that was just really hard to navigate. And I think just kind of managing expectations, sometimes, you may find yourself in that type of situation. I think the more important thing for me at that time was to lean into my peer relationships and make sure I had that nurture and support.

Because I was just really feeling incredibly discriminated against. And I mean she, you said what you said. I have receipts. But as it pertains to some of the other things, whether a woman is pregnant or quite frankly, as a Black woman or as a Black person in general. It’s assumed that I do not have strong analytical chops. My dear, I am a scientist, I have an MIT degree, my analytical chops are pretty poppin’. And so, it was kind of understand, what are the biases that exist against you? So, I think for blonde hair white women a lot of times it’s you’re very airheaded and you’re not smart.

For Black women it’s you’re aggressive and you’re not good at math. For Asian women, it can oftentimes be you’re very timid, and you’re very quiet.

Kara: You’re submissive.

Isa: You’re submissive, exactly. And so, what I try to do is I try to actually nip those in the bud early in the conversation so we can get on with the meat of the program. So that means, in a conversation with Bob the new CFO. Isa, tell me about yourself. Bob, this is my background. By the way, I remember that talk that you gave and yeah, my professor at MIT, I was in his class and he said something that reminded me, whatever the case is. Go ahead and nip all those things in the bud. But for me as a Black woman I’m smiling a lot because if I don’t smile they’re like, “She’s aggressive.”

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

So, I think those are some of the things. So, like I said, to just sum it up is (a) anticipating what those things are, nip it in the bud when you really feel like you have to with a particular person, (b) call people out. I've actually said to people, "Would you have said that to me if I were a white man?" I mean, and if you would have, maybe...

Kara: Again, be willing to be awkward? That's going to be real awkward but sometimes it's worth it.

Isa: People don't want to be called out on their stuff. But also, I think that there is a great deal of willingness to learn these days when you messed up. And so honestly, you also have to just – you have to teach people how to treat you sometimes. And what you're not going to do is come to me with the disrespect and assumptions because I don't have time.

Kara: There's so much good stuff and I've actually been taking notes. There's a few things I want to pull out. So, one of the things we're talking about I think is discernment between when you can get away with making a joke, when you can kind of handle it yourself versus when you do need to go through the institution structure. And of course, we all know that's not failsafe either. Like you experienced, I worked at a national prominent non-profit once and had a problem with one of my supervisors. And the solution, they just told me to work it out with them directly.

I was like, "Is that what HR is for? Is that what your department does? Okay, that seems like a waste of money then." But whatever, obviously that's not always a safe route either. But I think one of the big picture things here that I want people to take away even before we get into some of these, you said is sometimes you do go to HR, they're not helpful. And then the question's just now what? We can all agree and we would all sign the petition that we should not have to put up with the bullshit that we put up.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

Some of us have to put up with much more bullshit than others. Amen, I too would like that world and how we're trying to work on it. But also, we're here now and are you going to let that decide for you what you can accomplish? And you clearly have not. You're like, that was some bullshit. Okay, I went to HR and then the HR was some bullshit. This was like I'm not getting resolution here but that's not going to be in charge of what I can accomplish. I'm going to lean on my friends. I'm going to lean on my peer support. I'm going to acknowledge this harm happened, it wasn't remedied.

And I'm still going to work the next day or if you can't I'm going to go find another job or I'm going to whatever. The place that, people get into this mindset oppression cul-de-sac that's so unnecessary of – I'm sort of thinking that obviously the answer is not just to feel great about being racially harassed at work. And obviously the answer is not you can't always solve it where you are. But all I want to say is we've got to zoom back out and what am I trying to accomplish in my life and how do I keep showing up for that and not let whatever interaction I've had be the end of that for me?

Isa: I think for a lot of times especially with women we ask for permission too much or we seek permission. When the reality is that from a mindset perspective we should be empowered to lead our journey. We don't need your permission. And I think a lot of these points that we're bringing up, actually really kind of speak to the fact that we have the power to lead our own journey.

Kara: Yeah, 100%, and to not tell – the whole way that oppression works is by convincing people that they don't have any option, so they have to put up with whatever crumbs they are offered. And so, when we tell ourselves, well, I don't have any options. Well, I went to HR and then they didn't help so now I'm stuck and I have to work here. And I have to live with this and I have to whatever. We're doing that work for the system as opposed to

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

believing in our own capabilities and capacities. I'm fucking badass. Another company would be happy and lucky to have me.

Let me go make that happen for myself. It's the balance of acknowledging systemic issues but not just believing all of these thoughts that we have about the limitations for us personally and what we're capable of.

Isa: Right. And the last thing about mindset in this point. We shouldn't feel like we owe the companies we work for anything. They do not own us. And so, to your point, when you're a very talented individual you have especially in this market, you're going to have so many options of where you want to go. I actually have gotten to the point where I actually made that clear to my senior leaders. I said, "Listen, this is what we're not going to do. We're not going to mess up my comp this year."

I say, "If you want lemon, you want to pay for lemons, you get lemon work, you need to go find somebody else but you want Isa work, you want Isa level production, you're going to have to come up and pay. I'm not going to take your BS." And it's so funny because to your point about being awkward. A lot of the guys I was reporting to were these older white men. And you can tell, their eyes just got big. In their head they were like, did she just say that to me? And I'm like, I did and I'm here, and I'm looking at you, and I sure did.

And they told me, they were like, "Dang girl, you've got some tenacity." That was the whole, the joke about me in the same way as when I was working on Wall Street. But I think that it's not harmful to make sure that the people who need to know, know that you are in high demand. Men have these conversations so naturally and all the time. Whereas I think sometimes as a woman you're conditioned to be agreeable and likeable and that feels confrontational. But again, it's leading your own journey.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

When I make the point about feeling empowered to lead your journey, one of the things that's really important on the professional side is making sure we secure sponsorship. A lot of people, especially women and people of color assume that they're just going to get promoted because of their merits. When the reality is that merit plays a part, but securing the sponsor who is going to bang on the table behind closed doors for you and making sure that they know your intentions and your motives, that's really important.

One of my mentors always told me, "Isa, the biggest decisions of your career are always made when you're not in the room." So, then the question becomes obviously, who is in the room who can advocate for me on my behalf? And I feel like women especially are over-mentored and under-sponsored. I actually don't need a ton more mentorship. I need people who can make sure that I get to that next level. And I just think that that is so important and such a big part of leading your journey.

Kara: Yeah, that's such a good point. And we have to go figure out who those people are and cultivate those relationships. Your company may have a mentoring program where they assign somebody to you but that means nothing about whether that person's going to bang on the table or insist that you be there or whatever else.

Isa: Or even have the power to do so.

Kara: Yeah. You've got to go build those relationships. And I think it's interesting because I was in academia, I was a litigator and I was in academia before I became a life coach as one does, normal career trajectory. But that was one of the things that I focused on a lot in law school. I was not on the law review. I did not graduate in the top, I went to

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

Harvard but I graduated probably [inaudible] so I don't know, top 20, 30. But I was not at the top of my class.

But I had found the one professor who came to visit for the semester who did all of the reproductive rights work that I wanted to do. And that was the person that I went and was her research assistant and cultivated a relationship with her. And was strategic about how to create my relationships. I think that is such a crucial point. All those old boys networks have been running on relationships for years. And we have to go create those ourselves.

And I will say I find people often have a hard time, they don't know how to do that. They don't know what to do. And here's my free piece of advice for all of you, go be useful. Be useful to someone. Offer them something they want. Doesn't have to be big. I heard you talking about how you were looking for a good book for your kid to teach them about x. I gave these three books to my niece, she loved them, let me just email them to you. Honestly, it can be as little as that. Be of service, offer some value to someone, it doesn't have to be huge but just that's how you start that.

It's not marching in someone's office and being like, "I need a sponsor, what do you think?"

Isa: Right, exactly. And like you said, the value can be little things. But like Maya Angelou said, people will never remember what you said. But they'll remember how you made them feel. And that person's really valuable or that person really shows up for me. That's a feeling and that's something I can always remember. And so, like I said, sponsorship is so, so incredibly important. And I don't think people stand a great chance of progressing without it.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

Kara: Yeah. And it doesn't get talked about enough because it is one of those happens behind the scenes kind of things.

Isa: Definitely.

Kara: So good. Yeah, and women are socialized to believe that the best thing you could say about a woman is that she's not greedy. That women are socialized to just – I think of the orphan in Charles Dickens, just not even asking, not even a "Please, sir, can I have some more?" Just take whatever you're given and that asking for more is greedy. And the truth is again, yeah, socialization impacts the people in charge of you. So, some of them might have that thought about you.

But are you willing to believe in yourself, and your own capacity, and your own capability? And be like, "Alright, if leadership at this company thinks that women asking for raises are greedy then I need to find a different company. I'm not staying here. This is not the place for me." So good. I was like, what's the segue way here? I'm just going to be like, we're taking a left turn and talking about something else. It's all related in some ways.

Talking about these different external structures. Another thing that I know you are sort of an expert in and is behind your company you founded is the way that social media is impacting people's kind of mental health these days. And I guess I want to preface this conversation for my listeners because my listeners are used to hearing me say your thoughts create your feelings, not external things. And I think obviously that's true.

But it's also true that especially I think with social media and the way that it sort of works on our brains through what we're seeing and through normalizing certain visual things for us without us even consciously thinking about it. It's an and, not an or. It's not the thoughts about it don't matter but



## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

it's also understanding the technology and how to set limits on it if you want to, the same way that when I teach about body image, I'm teaching so much thought work.

And I'm also like, and also fill your Instagram feed with people who look like you but it [inudible] for you to look at all these people who don't look like you. Where your brain is just constantly triggered to have these negative thoughts. So, this is not to say that your thoughts don't impact your feelings around social media but it's an and, not an or. Are there ways that we could deal with it better? So, can you talk a little bit about what you have found and the social science has found in terms of the relationship between social media and mental health?

Isa: Yeah. So, to your point, Kara, I think that was a very great point, your thoughts create your feelings. The thing I'll add to the beginning of that is that we allow social media to impact our thoughts which then create our feelings. And so, when we live in that world, what happens is that we end up in this endless cycle of comparisons. She got pregnant, and she said she only tried once and I've been trying to get pregnant for five years. Or wow, I love her body, man, look at my arms. I don't like my arms anymore.

Or that person got promoted three times already and we were the same year in business school. I'm falling behind. And so, what happens is that quite frankly, social media, the way that we use it, it's a content platform. It's not a connection platform. And because it's a content platform people are sharing the highlight reels of their life. People aren't sharing the fact that they miscarried. People aren't sharing the fact that they got passed over for a promotion this year.

People aren't sharing the fact that they're not feeling that great about their body in the moment. And so, when you're looking at and consuming

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

highlight reels and then comparing it to your real life, it really actually does mess up your mindset about how to feel about yourself.

And so, from a social science perspective and just kind of mental health perspective, and I'm sure you know this already, but instances of depression and loneliness have gone up dramatically over the last several years in correlation to the growth we've seen in social media, the number of hours we spend on social media each day. The number of respective amount of time. And so, I think that (a) the highlight reel issue is actually a very real issue because like I said, our lives are actually messy. Our lives are flawed. We're flawed human beings.

And we're very imperfect but that's not what you are seeing on social media. So, it just becomes a little bit hard to contextualize yourself in this world of perfection because we're not perfect. And so, one of the things that we focus on, one of the things that I became every adamant about was making sure that I was working on and investing in my friendships offline. Because Facebook says, "You have 2,000 friends." Are they really your friends, though? And then quite frankly we become close to people who are reliably liking our content all the time.

There's some people where everything I post on Twitter they like. And then they DM me like we're friends. We're not friends. And so, I think that something like 58% of millennials and Gen Z say that they don't have a close friend. And so, when you think about that, but you think about the fact that they're on social media on average three to five hours a day.

Kara: And you've got to absorb that stat. That is wild, 58% say they don't have a close friend.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

Isa: Don't have a close friend. But here's what they do, social media is an escapism tool. So, it's like me just scroll, scroll, scroll so I don't have to deal with my real life. And so, to that extent I actually started a venture backed company called Squad. And Squad is all about making sure that you have a really easy and fun way to talk to your friends every day. You can't go discover people on the platform. So, I can't go connect with Kim Kardashian on Squad if I don't have her cellphone number.

It's really about who's your existing network and doubling down on that, doubling down on those existing friendships is where you get those dopamine or serotonin hits that you really need. And so, like I said, dial it back up. Squad is all about how do you as a contrast to social media where people are posturing for likes, how do you actually just go deep with the handful of friends every day and make it super easy, and fun, and light?

And then on the overarching social media side there's a mindset shift that we need to actually invest in for ourselves to make sure that we don't get sucked into that comparison paralysis. And we just talked about the workforce. I cannot tell you the number of people who graduated with me at MIT or graduated with me at Cornell or Hampton who are now like, "I'm just not fired up because my other classmates are further." That's just not true.

Kara: They're looking at you on social media and they're like, "Look at what Isa's doing." Or I see this with coaches looking at my business. I mean first of all, everybody should go check out Squad because that sounds fun and awesome. And then in terms of the sort of bigger platforms that still exist, I think one really good way to key into this is exactly what you're saying, people use it for numbing out. And you can actually use social media the way you use anything else, food, booze, gambling, Netflix, whatever, sex to check in, how does it feel.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

I can feel the difference in my body between when I am actually just, okay, it's on Instagram but I'm DMing a good friend of mine and it feels like we're having an actual conversation about our real lives. And we are connecting, versus the feeling I get in my body when I'm just scrolling mindlessly. You can, anything that can be used to numb or buffer can also be used as a tool to check in with yourself, why am I doing this? Is it hard for me to not get on? Do I set a limit and then ignore it? How am I using this to numb and buffer and it's almost like everything goes back to feeling awkward?

Because I think one of the reasons that people use social media so much, obviously the pandemic had an effect on everybody being online so much and mental health deteriorating. But also, I know so many people who just, it feels safer. It feels awkward to try to make a new friend. What if you've got to ask an acquaintance if they want to hang out and then they say no? Or you ask someone in the drop-off line and then you got to see them every day or whatever, and it just feels safer and the part of our brain that wants us to feel safe is like, just scroll and talk to the online friends.

But what does it take to be willing to be like, "Okay, I'm going to ask that other mom that I see every morning for coffee? And if she says no, I'm going to feel like I want to die but it's worth it and I'm going to do that 10 times until someone says yes and I can make a real life connection."

Isa: Those are the risks that we have to take to experience life, fun and vulnerability. We can't let rejection or the fear of rejection drive the way that we interact. And one thing to your point about the – I call it the endless scrolling the contents sunken place. There's this rule of social media called the 1-9-90 rule. And that rule dictates that one percent of people of social media users are the people who create the vast majority of content. 9% of people lightly engage, they'll retweet, they'll share, etc.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

But 90% of social media users are lurkers. And those are people who post nothing. They just go into the feed and scroll, scroll, scroll. So that's a very, very – it's a significant majority of people using the platform. And so, one thing I'll always tell people is leverage the connection oriented tools on social media more, DM your friends. You text your friends, people actually are talking to their close friends across upwards of three to six platforms these days. So, I think that's actually very important.

Another thing that I say as it pertains to scrolling is, when you wake up in the morning, spend one hour off social media or wait to get on and then before you go to bed have a one hour break because we live in this mindset of scarcity. Nothing's enough. The first thing we think about when we get up, I didn't get enough sleep. The last thing we think about when we go to sleep, man, I didn't get enough work done. And being in that mindset and looking at everyone's highlight reels, it just really messes up your mental.

And so, connection oriented, features, and DMs etc., and just kind of having that intentionality because like I said, all of this affects our mindset.

Kara: Yeah, I love that. I mean I think that's also as I was talking about me and some other person I was also thinking, okay, and also of course there are people who are disabled or not able to do that. But fine, if you're making a friend online, great. And then have a DM conversation or see if they want to take phone numbers and text. Whatever it is, even if you're not going to be meeting people in person, it's just, how do I cultivate this one-to-one connection in some way where we actually are getting to know each other and not just consuming each other's content?

And I think also the one thing I'd add to what you're saying is also curating what you see. Because I always see life coaches and I don't come from a –

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

my coaching type is not like, I'm amazing, buy my life. It's very, life is suffering, learn how to deal with it. So, my feed is like a Jewish Buddhist life coach. So, I feel like my feed is full of people talking about the hard stuff. So that's out there. I have too many coaches in my feed. People need a balance. But you just as in life, social media in some ways is a mirror of life.

You can hang out in life with a bunch of people who can't be vulnerable and can't tell the truth, and always have to pretend everything's great, and are always trying to one up each other and whatever else. And you can do that online. And if you are going to be online and you are going to consume content, go looking for the content that challenges you, or teaches you, or does something useful for you. Not just, well, I went to high school with this person so I have to look at pictures of their new Bentley every day till I die for no good reason.

Isa: It's so interesting you said that, because last night I literally took out probably 70% of the clothes in my closet and in my drawers. I've put them on my floor so my bedroom's an entire mess right now. And I said, "Okay, it's time to revamp. Spring cleaning." Do that for social media too. If you're scrolling and you're not feeling good and it's not bringing you joy, maybe you're engaging with the wrong type of stuff.

Kara: Right. It doesn't matter how pretty it is. If it doesn't fit, if it doesn't feel good, get rid of it.

Isa: Exactly.

Kara: So good. I'm so glad that we got to have this conversation. Will you tell people, obviously they should look up at Squad, and I assume that's on the App Store or wherever else you would find it. But where else can they find you if they want to hear you talk more?

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

Isa: They can find me on Twitter and Instagram @isa I-S-A dwatson, so I-S-A-D-W-A-T-S-O-N Diane is my middle name. Or they can find me on TikTok because now I'm, you know, with the kids.

Kara: I have not downloaded TikTok.

Isa: Really?

Kara: I can run my business or I can have TikTok, I cannot do both.

Isa: That's funny.

Kara: It just seems impossible.

Isa: It's actually pretty fun.

Kara: No, it seems too fun, that's why I haven't.

Isa: Yeah, it's pretty fun. But I'm at isadwatson\_bk for Brooklyn.

Kara: I'm coming to you from Brooklyn right now.

Isa: Me too.

Kara: Look at that. I can do the normal Brooklyn thing and go, where are you? But we won't do that online.

Isa: I live downtown.

## **UFYB 243: Using Mindset to Succeed in White Male-Dominated Industries & Social Media: A Conversation with Isa Watson**

Kara: Because everybody will know where we live. Alright, thank you so much for coming on. Go check out Isa's work, check out Squad, and go curate your social media.

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