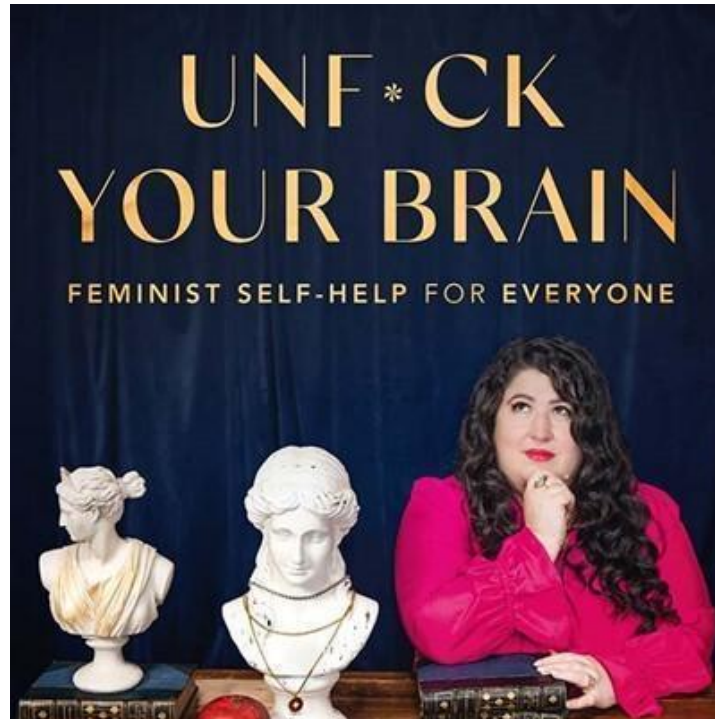# UFYB 252: Don't Fetishize the Burps of Your Subconscious

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

<u>Kara Loewentheil</u>

<u>UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil</u>

UFYB 252: Don't Fetishize the Burps of Your Subconscious

Welcome to *Unf*ck Your Brain*. I'm your host, Kara Loewentheil, Master Certified Coach and founder of The School of New Feminist Thought. I'm here to help you turn down your anxiety, turn up your confidence, and create a life on your own terms. One that you're truly excited to live. Let's go.

Hello my chickens. How are you? I just got back from 10 days in Italy and I took the gentleman consort on a luxury tour. It was really an incredible trip in so many ways. We stayed in these incredibly beautiful places. We stayed at this hotel that was in a 10th century castle. We stayed in a castle that was in a 14th century monastery and a palazzo in Venice. Just incredibly just beautiful surroundings. We saw incredible art. We ate delicious meals. It was amazing. And also, we were still humans.

I got stressed out when I was hangry. I don't like being hot and we were there in a heatwave. I was sometimes annoyed with myself, sometimes annoyed with my partner. I was in love with all the things about the gentleman consort and myself that I'm always in love with and then I was annoyed by all the things that I'm always annoyed about that my brain creates annoyance over. Because even a luxury vacation to Italy is not an exit ramp from the human experience.

And I was also going through a grieving process on the trip because a few hours before the trip I had to put my cat of 20 years, Darwin to sleep. He had a very good long run and had just kind of come to the end. But all of that timing was kind of insane. So, I spent, you know, I flew first class to Italy and I spent the flight crying because I'd just had to put down my cat. Really when I tell you that life is 50/50, life is fucking 50/50. So that's what I've got. That's not the end of the podcast but I don't really have a segue. That's just my update.

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I felt like it was important for you all to know that life is 50/50 even when you are staying in a palazzo with a 14th century ceiling, life is still 50/50. Also, I'm such a weird history nerd. I'm sure some of you are like, that sounds old or gross. I had this problem on this trip where twice we got 'upgraded' because I had booked the lowest room class because I always want to stay in the old part of a building.

So, if a hotel is like, "Oh, we have a few rooms from the original monastery but then we have fancy new suites." Then I will book the old room because I want to stay in the old building because my father is a rare book dealer and I will fetishize old European things probably for the rest of my life. And then we would get upgraded to a new fancy suite and I would be like, "I wanted the old dank castle room."

Anyway, alright, here is what we're talking about today. We're going to segue because this is my first day back at work after vacation and just my brain is tired. I don't even have a segue. Here's what I'm going to talk about. This is something that I have talked about in so many ways, and so many different places. But also, I will never stop talking about it because it is one of the biggest impediments to changing your thoughts and to making progress in your life. And it's a thought you have that is actually so subconscious and below the surface.

You don't even realize how much it is fucking with you. So, it's one of those concepts that's really simple to explain, I could summarize this episode to you in 30 seconds. But it takes a lifetime of practice to really understand and internalize it. So here is what it is. When people start learning about thought work, one of the obvious questions they have or the obvious concerns they have is that thought work is gaslighting themselves. So, in other words sometimes they worry that changing their thoughts on purpose is somehow like lying to themselves or invalidating themselves.

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This is a totally normal concern and it's one I've addressed but there's a kind of a hidden assumption in this question that most people don't pause to actually analyze and parse out. And that is the idea that your original thoughts, the thoughts that just come to you from your unconscious, your original thoughts have some weight or importance just by virtue of being your original thought. So, I'm going to say that again.

When we say, "Maybe I'm lying to myself, or I'm gaslighting myself by trying to change my thought." It implies that that original thought has meaning or value just inherently because it is your original thought. So, this idea that your original thought has more weight or importance just because your original thought, just because it happens to be what your brain came up with.

So, what that means is that what we're telling ourselves subconsciously is that something that you don't think on purpose, something you didn't pick, a thought that just happens to come up in your brain is more likely to be true or real than a thought that you think or pick on purpose. It is the premise that your subconscious or unconscious thoughts, so those are the ones that your brain just came up with on its own, unintentionally. The idea that those are more true, or more real, or more valuable than thoughts you choose on purpose.

Do you guys understand what I'm saying? If you worry that you are lying to yourself, or gaslighting yourself when you try to change your thoughts, what that implies is that your original thought is somehow more truly you or more valuable, or more true just because your brain happened to spit it out. And I think we really need to look at that premise because I think that it's, spoiler alert, not true and not helpful.

Why are we believing that just because we unconsciously came up with one particular string of words, of all the words we could have thought, we

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came up with one random string of words, why are we believing that just because that is what happened, it has some inherent truth or value? And there is a known and documented psychological bias that humans have for things that are already theirs. So, I'm not saying this is the only reason we do this.

We also do this for reasons I've talked about on the podcast in a million different ways, because we want to always think we're right because it is scary to think that we might be wrong. And our brain thinks we're going to die. Or we think we just are perceiving reality objectively. So of course, our thought about it must be true. So, there's different reasons. But there's also this specific bias that humans have where we value things more when they belong to us.

So, for instance there are experiments where people will take a small object like a mug and they will ask people what they would pay for it. And people will say whatever the answer is, $5, $10. Then they will give the mug to people for free. And then they will ask them how much they're willing to take to give up the mug, to sell the mug. And suddenly people want more money for it so they might have thought it was only worth $5 or $10 to acquire the mug. But once the mug is theirs then they want whatever amount more, $15, $25 to give up the mug.

We give things disproportionate meaning and weight when they belong to us. We value things. We overvalue things just because they're ours. We want more to give them up than we would ever pay to get them. And I think that we do this with our thoughts. Yes, it's partly that we want to believe that we're perceiving reality objectively because that's less scary to us. And yes, it's that we don't like to be wrong for the same reason. But also, I think that we just think that because we had a thought it's somehow real or valuable just because we came up with it and we like things that are ours.

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And then we think that picking a new thought on purpose is somehow less true or valuable. But that makes no sense when you break it down. What creates our unconscious thoughts? Our genetics, our socialization, what our family taught us, what we learned in school, what we hear in the media, trauma, pollution that impacts our genetics or epigenetics. What we've eaten, our blood sugar at that moment. Random ass neural firings. Our brains are basically Jell-O with electricity bouncing around in there, that's what creates our unconscious thoughts.

All that shit which we do not choose or control is what creates the original thoughts we have. Now, what creates our conscious thoughts, the thoughts we choose on purpose, it's our prefrontal cortex. It's the most evolved, most rational part of our brain. It's the part that doesn't even fully develop until you're in your mid-20s. It's the part that can think about the future and have values, and priorities, and do high logic and reason.

So basically, when we say that choosing a new thought is tricking ourselves, or lying to ourselves, or gaslighting ourselves, or whatever else. What we're saying is that the burps that our subconscious brain made of its own mixed up volition are somehow more real and more us than thoughts we have chosen on purpose. Why do we want to do that? Why would we want to think about it that way? I really want you to think about this. Because it's all made up. We get to decide what we believe are the most real or true thoughts we have.

I choose to believe that the most real or true, or the most me thought that I have is one that I fucking picked on purpose. It's the thoughts that I choose that are based on my goals, and my values, and my chosen belief systems. That's what's me, much more than my unconscious stew of a brain that's got genetics, and socialization, and all these things, other people told me that I never thought about if I wanted to believe, and how my blood sugar is

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and whatever else is going into whatever random thought my brain decides to offer me.

That's not what is more me. What's more me are the thoughts that I pick on purpose. That's what's more true to me. I think sometimes when people say that they're afraid of gaslighting themselves with thought work. What they mean is when they are changing their thought for not a very good reason, so if you have thoughts that you aren't good enough to be in the kind of relationship you want. And so, you decide to change your thoughts about your partner because you are motivated by this belief that you can't get anyone else, you may as well learn to like the person you're with.

That is going to feel like you're gaslighting yourself. But it's not because your original thoughts are more true. Your original thoughts might be that your partner is a slob and annoying. And your new thoughts might be that your partner is messy because they're creative and they talk to you a lot because they love you, whatever. It's not that your original thoughts about the person were inherently objectively true and valuable, and your new thoughts are gaslighting because they're new thoughts.

In that situation the reason that you feel like you're gaslighting yourself or that you're kind of using thought work against yourself is that the whole reason you're doing thought work is being motivated by a shitty belief about yourself. The whole reason you decide to change your thoughts about your partner was not driven by wanting to truly choose your thoughts about your partner to align with your values, or priorities, or whatever. It was driven by scarcity and thinking you can't get anyone else, you'd better learn to be happy with what you've got.

That's what feels like gaslighting yourself, the motivation behind changing the thoughts. The process of choosing a new thought on purpose rather than just thinking whatever unconscious random BS your brain has spit out.

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That's not gaslighting, that is not tricking or lying to yourself. When you feel that discomfort around it, that's not because of the act of choosing a new thought. It's not the skill or the technique that is the problem. It is like any tool, the reason you are using it, the motivation behind it that is making you feel icky. So, it's such an important distinction.

Sometimes we have an unconscious or subconscious original thought and we decide that we want to keep it. Awesome. It doesn't mean, what I'm teaching doesn't mean that none of your subconscious or original thoughts are useful, or true, or helpful, or you might want to keep them. But I just want you to think about this idea that the entire technique or operation of changing new thoughts is somehow about overriding your real true more valuable thought. This unconscious weight we give to an original thought just because it's original.

And the way that we identify with it and think it's somehow more real than a thought that we choose on purpose. That's the assumption that I really want to encourage you to disrupt. Your original thoughts are not more you than your new thoughts. It all comes down to how do you want to understand yourself and your identity? Are you the combination of everything that has happened to you running on autopilot with no intentional direction? Is that how you want to understand yourself?

I think the thoughts I choose to believe on purpose are much more the real me, the conscious me, the me that I can relate to on the highest level. If I choose to keep a thought I came up with subconsciously that's fine, if I evaluate it, and I decide I want to keep it. But to just fetishize the burps of my subconscious is to really misunderstand how the brain works.

It's like getting into a car and not taking control of the wheel, just like putting your foot on the gas and believing that wherever the car goes is where you really wanted to go. That's nonsense, you would never do that. So don't do

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that with your brain. And you have to remember that everything is subjective, even what we perceive as reality is heavily mediated by our brains. You are already not just perceiving objective reality. There are fish who see more colors than we know even exist. Our brains are always filtering, and analyzing, and already interpreting reality.

So, this is what's so important about this. When we are thinking that our original thoughts are somehow more valuable or real, sometimes we're thinking it's because those are true. I didn't have to interpret or come up with an opinion, or change my interpretation. That's just, I just have the thought about reality and now I'm trying to interpret it differently. No, your brain was already interpreting everything that came into it.

You had already formed a subconscious evaluation of whatever you're thinking about but you're just pretending to yourself or telling yourself your brain is telling you that that is more objective, and true, and real, and more you. Your choice is not pick thoughts on purpose or keep my true or subconscious perceptions. It's pick thoughts on purpose or just believe made up thoughts that I didn't come up with on purpose and haven't evaluated.

Do I want to come up with a thought on purpose and evaluate it? Or do I want to let my subconscious mind come up with something without any supervision and then just believe that? I think you know which one of those I would suggest.

Have a beautiful week my chickens and don't believe everything you think, please.

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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.