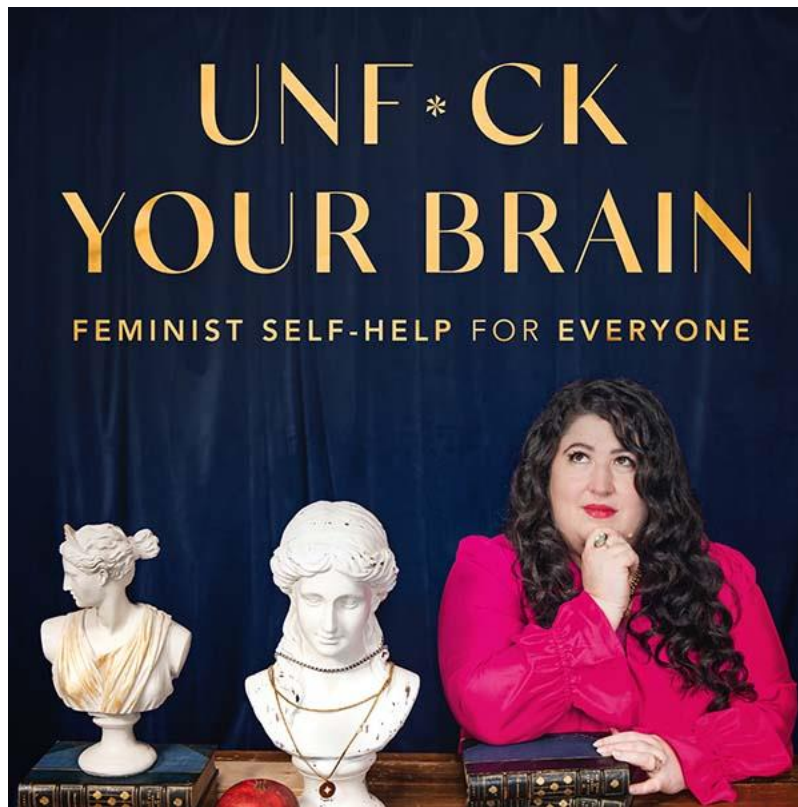


## Bonus: Election Mindset Shifts You Can Make Right Now



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

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Alright, my friends, it has been quite a week and I have been doing a lot of coaching of my clients, of my students, of my followers, in the comments on Instagram, everywhere. And what I want to do with this bonus episode is try to help some of you all who are really in it and really suffering. By sharing some of the most common thought errors that I see happening right now and the shifts that I want to offer you if you want to use them to feel a little bit differently. So, let's get into doing that.

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.

Alright, so I feel like I need to give the disclaimer I always give, but it feels very important now, that I am in no way telling anyone what they should think or feel. That's not my job. That's not my business. I don't know what you should think or feel. You have to decide what to think or feel. I don't think there's a right way to think or feel. I don't think there's anything wrong with having any set of thoughts or feelings that you have about the election or anything else in the world. I am all about women's autonomy to think for themselves.

So, nothing that I'm saying in this episode should be construed as meaning that if you have one of these things that I'm calling a thought error. That's bad and wrong, that you shouldn't have it, that you should think something else, that you shouldn't be having your feelings. None of that. I'm not doing any of that. Sometimes it's hard to believe because women are so socialized to think that they're doing everything wrong and to think that other people are authorities.

So, you listen to my podcast, you think Kara's an authority on what I should think. And if she says that this is a better thought, then that's the thought

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I'm supposed to have. No, I am just here to identify and share with you some of the thoughts that I see causing a lot of suffering that I'm not sure is necessary, that I know is not emotionally necessary. And the shifts that I have seen be helpful for myself and my clients, my students, my followers. And then those are just a resource for you to use if and when you want to use them.

And ironically, I'm going to start off with one that I'm seeing from people who aren't freaking out. So, I have a lot of people in my world who have been studying my work and doing thought work and coaching themselves since the last time Trump got elected, or even before that. And because they have been managing their minds for so long, they're not spinning out. But then what's happening is they feel bad about not spinning out. They are questioning themselves about not spinning out. They are telling themselves that maybe they're reacting wrong.

And they have other people in their lives getting mad at them, that they're not spinning out. Other people saying, "You don't have the vibrations in your body, the sensations in your body that I think you should have and now I'm mad at you about that." So I want to talk about kind of the first thought error I see, which is the idea that anxiety or panic is necessary. And I think that we have this conflation that we think, that you have to be freaking out about something in order to take it seriously or in order to care about it.

And then if you're not freaking out, if you're not dysregulated, then you don't care or you don't understand that something's important. I just think that's factually untrue. People are often dysregulated about things that aren't that important, myself included. And I am sometimes thankfully, regulated, even when things are really challenging or something important is going not the way I want it to.

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So, this conflation between unregulated emotions, dysregulated emotions, and those meaning something about your investment or care about the world or about the severity of a problem, that's just, I think that's a thought error. I just think that's a conflation that isn't true. And in fact, kind of the whole point of thought work is to learn how to not have a primitive brain response any time something goes wrong because I don't think that we are very strategic or effective when that's how we are reacting.

Now, again, that doesn't mean it's morally wrong to freak out. It's just very normal and human. But if you think about the people who have to make really big picture decisions, who have to perform under really stressful conditions. Those people are not in those positions or they don't succeed in those positions because they're really good at losing their shit, they're really good at freaking out, they're really good at panicking. So again, it's not morally wrong to freak out or panic or anything.

But I don't believe that it is necessary to prove to yourself or others that we care about something, that we understand the gravity of a situation or that we're going to do something about it. You can actually even be a lot of help in the world without freaking out about the thing you're trying to work on. So that is one of the first thought errors that I see coming up that is kind of getting in people's way.

The second thought error I see coming up and these are in no particular order, I'm just going through my list, is that thought work or kind of self-coaching are not relevant to something like this. That's just for when you have a fight with your boyfriend, but it's not for the potential end of democracy or whatever our thoughts are about what's happening. And I think that's also a thought error.

A lot of my work is based on the work of Victor Frankl, who wrote, *Man's Search for Meaning*, which was a book about his experience choosing to think a certain way during his time in Nazi concentration and death camps.

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The most severe circumstances a person could have pretty much. And his whole thesis was that the freedom to determine one's own attitude is the last freedom left to, I'm going to say people, he would say, the last freedom left to man, is the last freedom left to people under any circumstances.

And so don't sort of sell yourself short or deprive yourself of your own support by not coaching yourself on these thoughts. Whatever thoughts you're having about what's happening politically, those are thoughts you can coach yourself on. That doesn't mean that some of them aren't true or that they're not to be taken seriously. See point one about how we don't have to be freaking out just because something has real consequences.

Self-development and self-coaching are not just for when things are easy. It is actually imperative when things are challenging because what all of us want to do, all of us, even the people who disagree with us, we're all trying to make the world over in the image we think it should be. And if somebody else's image is winning for the moment, then we need to have the resources and the power in ourselves to keep showing up and keep persuading and keep trying to create the world in the image we think it should be.

And we need all of our emotional regulation and mental fortitude to do that and that's what self-coaching is all about. So, speaking of that sort of world we're trying to create, the third thought error I see is that our brains have a tendency to catastrophize. And then when something feels very big or important, we believe those catastrophizations so easily, especially when there's a shared contagion of them. When they're happening all around you, your friends, your family, people you follow on social media, the news, everybody's catastrophizing.

But the truth is, we don't know what will happen in the future. We don't know. We have some predictions, some ideas, but we don't actually know. We don't know what positive backlash we might see even if our worst fears

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happen. We don't know what avenues of solidarity might open up. We try to feel in control, ironically, by catastrophizing and that makes us feel out of control.

Our brain catastrophizes because your brain hates to not know what's going to happen. So, it would rather believe it knows and that the thing it knows is terrible. That makes your brain feel okay, I'm in control. I know the bad thing's going to happen, but we don't know. We don't know what's going to happen. And I want to offer you the idea that if you are really in danger, your primitive brain will figure it out.

So, planning for the future, coming up with a few scenarios of things that might happen and deciding how you'll react, that's not catastrophizing, that's planning. But when you're done planning, you stop thinking about it all the time. When you're catastrophizing, when you're just spinning out, you're not doing any useful planning. So, what I want to offer you is that yes, you can plan. But also, I want to offer you the idea that your primitive brain will help you when it's needed.

We all have a survival instinct and we're all here because our ancestors were extremely resilient and they figured shit out when things got really hard. So how can you trust and have faith that the future version of you will figure it out if it needs to? And that catastrophizing right now if you're not planning and you're just catastrophizing, it's not helping you figure anything out. And your brain's sort of feeling of certainty is really not related to how right it is.

And I would encourage you to do an exercise that I have done and that I've had some of my students do, which is, just think about sometimes your brain has been wrong before. And how can we hold that? I can hold that I read the educated predictions about what's going to happen politically. And I believe some of them may come true. And I literally, for better or worse,

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have a podcast of me talking about what my fears were the last time this happened, and some of them did not come true.

That doesn't mean that none of our fears will come true, but we have to be willing to question our brain, believing that with absolute certainty that it already knows everything about the future and that it is all bad and all going to happen. So how can you give airtime to the positive, or at least the neutral? How can you be in a place of acknowledging that you don't actually know what's going to happen but trusting yourself to figure out how to respond when it does?

One of the reasons we feel so sure we know what's happening relates to the next kind of, this isn't actually a thought error, This is a habit error, which is just being on social media too much and reading the news constantly. And that comes out of that catastrophizing and that desire to feel in control by knowing everything. But here's what I want to invite you to pay attention to. I and everybody else are telling you not to doom scroll and we're all still doing it.

But what I want you to understand is when you spend your whole time on your phone or reading the news, you actually sort of forget that you live in a body in a physical place in reality right now. It's like being in a virtual reality of catastrophe. It's almost like you leave your body and you just experience being a disembodied panic monkey in a room full of people screaming terrible thoughts at you. And that feels horrible and it's exhausting and it is not productive. You're not even planning when you're in that state.

So, I really want to encourage you to turn off your phone sometimes. You have a physical body that also needs care. You have a physical body where all of that stress is building up and it needs to be released. You need to go through that stress cycle. You need to dance or cry or have a nice scream in the shower like I did. It was very helpful.

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You need to get back into your body and get off of your phone and not just live in this virtual reality echo chamber of hysteria because even if every worst prediction was true, you being online reading them over and over again is not helping you prepare for anything.

So that leads me to another thought error and this is kind of related to the catastrophizing as well. And that is the thought error that everything is suddenly different as if we were living in a utopia before. I was coaching somebody, one of my students and she said, “I just can’t believe that there’s now a sexual predator has been elected to the White House.” And I was like, “I don’t think that’s the first time that’s happened. I’m not being flip. I think there’s probably been a lot of sexual predators in the White House, some of them we know about, some of them we may not.”

But we could all name a few, there have been sexist misogynists in the White House before. There have been people with authoritarian leanings in the White House before. We were not living in Utopia before this election day. And I’m not saying that things aren’t different, but not everything is different. And the reason this matters is that when we think about it like there was before and now everything is different and now the world is upside down. We feel very disempowered and confused.

We feel like we’re in an emergency that we have never seen anything like this before and we have no idea what to do and we’re totally helpless. And I don’t think that’s a helpful thought pattern. I think this is what America, a lot of America has been like for a very long time. This is as a Jewish person, when I see anti-Semitism on the rise, my thought is not, oh my God, I can’t believe this is happening. This has never happened before. Now everything’s different.

I’m like, “Oh, yeah, this happens all the time. It’s happening again.” And the same is true of a lot of these things that we are feeling are so shocking, that some of the country is racist and some of the country is sexist and

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some of the country cares more about the economy than human rights. The story of America is not one directional, unidirectional march towards progress.

Think about, we had the civil war and then we had reconstruction and the expansion of rights. And then we had Jim Crow and then we had to have the civil rights movement. And we're still trying to fix some of these problems. We're still dealing with police brutality against Black people in America. We're still dealing with systemic racism, sexism, sizeism. We're still dealing with a lot of discrimination and oppression. So, when we tell ourselves the story that all of a sudden, everything's different, what I find is that it makes us feel we are just overwhelmed and paralyzed and don't know what to do.

Whereas when we tell ourselves that this is another event in a series of events that are not out of nowhere and people have been working on these problems for a long time. And yes, this may be a setback, but it's not inconceivable or unrecognizable. Then we can see ourselves as part of a long line of people who have been working on these problems. And that also helps us understand that if we want to do something about it, we need to look for the people who have already been working on these issues. We don't have to start from scratch.

People have been working on these issues that we care about for a long time and we just need to go find them and learn from them and join them if we aren't already doing that. We are part of an ongoing story. We are not through the upside down. Again, I'm just telling you how I see this play out. If your thought that you're through the upside down feels fine to you or it's motivating you or you're getting a good result from it, it's okay with me. But that's not what I'm seeing.

What I'm seeing is that when we tell ourselves everything is totally different now, we end up feeling paralyzed and overwhelmed and we don't know

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what to do. So, I've saved the kind of easiest and hardest to swallow thought errors for last, so let's do the one that's hardest first.

There is a thought error happening when we think about the people who disagreed with us in this election and the votes that were cast. And I'm not sure exactly how to describe the thought. The thought error is sort of, I am good and they are bad. I guess that's a thought error. I'm a good person. They're a bad person. People who voted my way are good people. People who voted the other way are bad people. People who voted my way care about the right things. People who voted the other way, care about the wrong things.

And again, you can totally keep all of those thoughts. And I'm not even saying that I don't sometimes share some of those thoughts. But here's what I have found incredibly important to remember. We are all human, and I don't mean that in a kumbaya, so we have to love each other way. What I mean is, it is unfortunately the case that part of being human is being capable of making a decision that doesn't align with all of our values.

Being human means being capable of being misled, of being uninformed, of taking action based on incomplete information that ends up having negative consequences. Being human means being capable of making excuses for somebody that we love, admire, respect, or feel validated by, who ends up harming us or other people. Being human means being capable of ignoring or dismissing or minimizing other people's suffering for what we perceive as our own benefit. That is part of being a human.

I'm recording this and you're listening to this on computers and phones that we both know were not made by people with incredibly great working conditions, who got amazing pay and benefits. Do you know where your clothes came from? Are you driving a car with gasoline? I'm not saying you're a hypocrite, feel bad about yourself. I'm saying it is incredibly, unfortunately part of being a human to make decisions that benefit us, or

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we perceive will benefit us or that seem to benefit the people we care about. Even knowing there may be some cost to other people or there may be harm to other people.

And most of the time, we do minimize that harm or we explain it away or we say we don't quite believe it or we just don't think about it that much. That's part of being human. And when we tell ourselves that we are unimpeachably right and good and other people are incredibly and obviously bad and evil. We break that humility and understanding of our own humanity. Now, again, it's not kumbaya. It's not love your neighbor. You don't need to love your neighbor if you don't want to. I don't care. It's up to you. You get to decide.

This is not that meme that's like, we're all adults, so we can just be friends even if we disagree. That's not the point. I'm not even talking about how you interact with other people. What I'm talking about is how you think about yourself and your fellow citizens and the rest of humanity and what kind of outcomes you're going to get from those thoughts.

And I find that when we believe that we are unimpeachably right and good and everything we think is true. And other people because they made this decision are bad and wrong and horrible and evil. We are actually replicating the thought pattern that other people have, we believe, that we're trying to fight against. And I think that it makes us blind to our own misconceptions, our own mistakes. It makes us unable to be logical or to see clearly. It makes us unable to build coalitions that will succeed.

So, I know this one is the hardest to swallow and you don't have to swallow it. But I will just tell you that this is something I'm seeing a lot and that I have found so much relief and release in reminding myself of my own flawed humanity and of remembering that being flawed is actually a very normal part of being a human. And that having these kinds of cognitive biases, this self-interest is something all humans are capable of.

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And embracing that doesn't mean, so who cares, it means I can stop resisting this reality. And I can stop spending all of my energy sort of fighting the fact that some other people made a decision that I don't agree with. And I can start funneling it into trying to mitigate the harms that I care about or create the improvements that I care about.

And that brings me to the last kind of thought error I want to talk about. And this is actually one that isn't even specific to the election in the sense that it's coming up around the election. But it comes up when I coach people about their businesses, about thought work, about their relationships, whatever it is. And that is people saying, "Well, I believed we were going in a different direction. I believed that we would have the first female president. I believed that the Democrats would win. I believed that these policies would win. I believed we were making progress, and now I can't believe that anymore."

And I want to tell you from the bottom of my fucking heart that belief only means something when we are willing to believe without the evidence being what we want it to be. This is the absolute core of belief work, being willing to believe when things are not going your way. It is easy to believe when the world is matching what you want. It is easy to believe when you have all the results and returns you want. And there's an entitlement in believing that should be happening all the time and that if it isn't, well then you're not going to believe.

You're going to stop believing in shared humanity and the possibility of a progressive movement. You're going to stop believing in fighting for the rights and the benefit of all the people who need help, even if they don't know it. You're not going to be involved. You're not going to believe because the world is not matching your belief. This is what thought work is all about in our personal lives and in our politics. How do you hold faith that you can make an impact and how do you keep showing up even when you're not getting the gratification of that impact being true yet?

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How do we define evidence, promise, hope, belief? If we're defining it as everything I want isn't happening, there has been a setback, I've failed, what I want isn't carrying the day, so I'm not going to believe. Then we are doomed to feeling disempowered and giving up. We have to be able to hold belief when it is not producing results yet, we have to hold faith. We have to keep the candle burning for the world that we want to have, even when the world is not cooperating.

It is easy to believe in progress when progress is happening. How do we believe in it when it's not happening? That is what thought work is. How do we believe in it when we may not get the evidence we want in our lifetimes? If nobody worked on things that wouldn't come to fruition in their lifetime, we would have no progress at all, nothing big would ever happen. So how can you be willing to hold belief in the world you want to see and then showing up to create it especially when the evidence is not coming?

That is what we're doing on this podcast in our political lives and in our personal lives. Any change we want to make, how can we hold belief even when it's not happening yet or as we're experiencing now, even when some of it happened and then there was a failure? Sometimes that's even harder, there's been some success and then you fail. We think, well, I did the belief work and I had some success and now it's supposed to be success forever. No, there's no guarantee of that. History is not linear.

If you want to be in this, whatever that is, whatever you're trying to believe in, you have to be willing to believe even when it's not working, even when it worked and then it stopped working, even when it feels like you fell back. How do you keep creating and holding belief? That is what you get to decide, and you get to control. Alright, my friends, keep believing

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