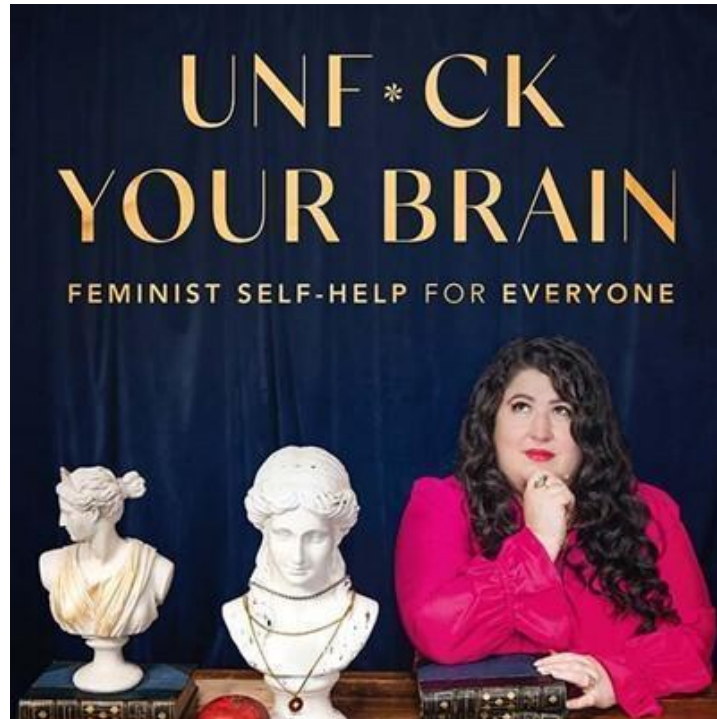


## UFYB Bonus: Pandemic Panic



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

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

## UFYB Bonus: Pandemic Panic

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 know that a lot of you are experiencing a lot of anxiety and distress caused by your thoughts about the news and the Covid-19 virus and everything that's going on. So I wanted to share this with you. This is a recording of a webinar that I did for my Clutch students over the weekend about how to apply thought work to all of the news and everything that's going on right now around this global pandemic.

Pandemic panic is what I'm calling it. So listen in. I hope that the episode helps. I also, on that webinar, did some live coaching and answering questions, and you can access that too, but those are on video for the full effect so you can see my expressions and everybody else's expressions and kind of get all of the body language of coaching too.

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Alright, first I want everyone, if you are sitting, put your feet flat on the floor. We're going to take a breath. Put your feet flat on the floor. Put your hands down at your sides. I want you to close your eyes. We're going to take three breaths. Some of you have not actually breathed all the way in a week. That's actually probably always the case, but especially now.

Breathe in through your nose. Fill up your lungs all the way until it hurts a little. Out through your mouth. We're going to do two more. Stay with me, my people who don't like to be in their bodies. Breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth. In through the nose, out through the mouth.

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Obviously if you're driving I hope you didn't close your eyes for that part. We're going to start with talking about our bodies. I want to get you back a little bit in your body. So here is what I want you to know first and foremost. The model applies to everything, including viruses. No matter what the New York Times says, even if they're declared a pandemic, the model still applies.

It is always the case that what exists is a circumstance and your thought about a circumstance. Always. And actually, Zekiah, who is one of the Clutch mentors reminded me that in the podcast, I guess that came out this week about self-improvement shame, which I actually recorded a few weeks ago, I talked about the idea that even growth is neutral because we like it when flowers grow and then we don't like it when viruses grow, and it's just our thought about it that makes the difference.

That was apparently prescient. I think probably I'd heard some starting news. But still, it's true. The existence of a virus is a circumstance. The number of people who have a virus is a circumstance. All of it is a circumstance. And then there are your thoughts.

Always you have to come back to that because I'm going to talk a lot about the ways in which when a circumstance changes dramatically or there is a lot of social anxiety or everybody agrees with you that all of a sudden we have a problem, it's easy to sort of forget that the model applies to everything.

And I've seen some of what has gone on in The Clutch Facebook group that I've seen that I wanted to address is people saying like, "Well, this is for when your anxiety isn't really about something, or this is for when there isn't really a danger, but now there is a danger." No.

It's always a circumstance and then your thought. There is no situation that thought work does not apply to, and the point of thought work is not to

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always believe that nothing could make a physical impact on you. So it doesn't matter that now there's a virus. It doesn't matter that now there is a new way of being sick or your life changing that you've learned about.

And especially just the fact that you have a lot of anxiety - and other people do - doesn't mean that somehow now we're in a real or serious situation that thought work doesn't apply to. Thought work is the most important when everyone is losing their minds, and all of your brain's biases are kicking in and working against you.

So I want to talk more about all of that. So the other thing that is also always true is that a feeling is not fatal and it's not going to kill you. You have to be willing to have your emotions, whether it's about a text message or a global pandemic. And honestly, your brain does not really know the difference, especially your primitive brain.

When you are in a panic, your prefrontal cortex goes offline a little bit and it can't really reason the way that it normally does. That doesn't mean there isn't thought work to do. It just means that's why we start with processing your emotion and bringing that intensity down a little bit.

One of the things that I have been working with lately that I've really liked as a technique, in addition to what I teach in the first week of The Clutch about processing your emotion and the sort of naming of sensation, that is a great exercise. Another thing you can try is just to kind of name and observe what's going on with you but from the perspective of that watcher.

So even just saying to yourself, "I see that you're feeling very anxious right now. That's okay. I'm here for you." Talking to yourself almost like you're someone else talking to you I find can be a very effective way to kind of offer yourself a little bit of comfort, a little bit of support, and to get a little bit of distance from the emotion that you're feeling. Help you calm down, help

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you allow the emotion. That will bring your prefrontal cortex a little bit back online.

So that, the emotional processing tool from the first week, even today in the Facebook group I think I posted an image about ways to process an emotion, to name it, to try to be willing for it to be there, to sit with it, all of that still applies. Your brain will try very hard to convince you right now that you should definitely not have your feelings and you should instead just read the nytimes.com 24/7. That's not a good idea.

You have to be willing to process your emotion first. So once you're allowing your emotion, how do we want to think about the circumstances that are out there, which by the way, are pretty heavily disputed. Remember when you're doing a model even that what you put in the circumstance line needs to really be the circumstance.

So for instance, a circumstance is I read an article that made this prediction. That's a circumstance. The circumstance is not this may happen. It's an important distinction because you're reading a lot, a lot of you, you're absorbing a lot of information from a lot of different sources, a lot of which is very speculative, and then you are taking all of that as fact and then you want to put that in the circumstance line, which maybe someday it will be, and it will go in the circumstance line, but right now, there's a lot of uncertainty and a lot we don't know, and that is part of why your brain is losing its shit.

But it's such a beautiful opportunity because the truth is that life is always unpredictable. And the only certainty is that we are all going to die some day. And I'm not being flip. That is the only thing we can be certain of. It has always been true that your time on earth and the time of the people you love and the people you hate and the people you don't even know about is limited.

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That's always been true. We never know how long our time is, how long we have, with ourselves, with the ones we love. We never know that. And we can never control when we're going to die or when someone else is going to die or become sick or leave us or move away from us or be separated from us.

Of course, we take some steps to try to limit our risk of dying in some ways, like we wear seatbelts. On the other hand, sometimes we do things that turn out to have been counterproductive down the line. Because it's all so unknown and uncertain. It's not something we can control or predict.

I actually think that historically, people have had a better understanding of this than we do now. I think that we, in contemporary America especially, have this illusion that we have total control. Now, I talk a lot about all the control you do have over your mind and your feelings and your results that you create for yourself in your life, but we do not control our circumstances.

That's the whole point. It's how we react to them. And I think that a lot of us in the US at least, have grown up, we haven't experienced war, we haven't experienced famine, we haven't experienced a lot of the lethal illnesses that used to be part of everyday life, or that still kill people in other countries all the time. We have an unrealistic belief in our ability to control our lives and forestall our own mortality, I think.

And I think that this kind of pandemic panic is really bringing that to the fore for us and really showing us just the truth which was always true, which is that life is unpredictable and that our time here is limited, and that we can't control when we or anyone else is going to be here or not. And we have to make peace with that and return to that certainty because it's all we ever know.

And the panic comes from trying to resist that truth and trying to control something that can't be controlled. I'm not saying that doesn't mean you

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don't want to take some certain actions to prepare for various potential outcomes. I'm going to talk later about that a little bit. But it will always feel terrible if you are trying to do it from a place of trying to control 100% who lives or dies, including you. Whether there's a pandemic happening or not, you will always feel insane because that is not something you can control.

And this is true about your loved ones also. They too may die someday. That's the truth of human - not may die, they will die someday. You may or may not be here for it. That's another truth of human life. It's always been true. Whenever that happens, if you are still here, you will get to experience it and decide how you want to show up for it.

It's often not what or when or how we want. And that is okay. That's part of being a human. That experience of grief or suffering or pain or loss that we are all so afraid of and trying to forestall, there's no forestalling it. You're going to have that experience someday, whether it's now or in 10 years, whether it's because of this virus or some other virus or something completely random.

And so trying to control something that you can't control for yourself or anyone else, that's what will make you feel agitated and crazy. And I see a lot of that happening with also people trying to control their loved ones. Now, make them believe the same things you believe about the virus, make them act in certain ways that they don't want to act. Just because there's a virus now doesn't mean that that is going to be any more effective than trying to control people in non-virus situations. It's going to feel just as terrible and be just as ineffective.

I'm also hearing a lot of fear around the idea that you might pass the virus to someone you love. But again, this is one of those sort of you might at any time do something, you might at any time save somebody's life that you love without even knowing it, or contribute to a loss of life without ever knowing it. You never know what that effect is.



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You could call someone before they leave the house so they're five minutes later than normal, and then they're caught in an accident at any time, and you may have saved their lives 1000 in other obscure ways and either way, whether they or you live or die is a neutral circumstance. You get to decide what you feel about it.

I'm not saying you should feel happy and thrilled about it, but I'm just saying it's not something you can control. It doesn't live outside of the model and it's not something that you can make happen a certain way or not happen a certain way, and trying to do that is going to make you feel crazy.

And as always, it's going to produce exactly the opposite of what you want. You want them to stay around so you can feel loved and connected to them, so then you spend the time you have with them, which is now, the only time we know for sure, trying to control them and feeling terrible. You don't get the result you want that way.

Don't buy into the lie your brain tells you that this is suddenly a totally new state of affairs where panic is helpful and nothing you've learned about managing your mind applies. That is, I think, the biggest mental danger that is happening. I am going to talk about how to make decisions about what you want to do, but you have to accept that your lack of control over ultimately what happens is always the case for you or anyone else.

And I think sometimes the kind of fixation on how you might harm someone else, it's kind of this fear and perspective guilt you have, it's actually a way of pretending to have control. It's like, "Well, if I believe that I could harm this person and I obsess about that, then I can sort of believe that I can protect them from harm or save them by how I act also."

So it's like a weird way of just trying again to take responsibility for or control something that you cannot control. Even if you pass a virus to



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someone, it's still a neutral C. And you get to decide what you think about that.

The other thing to consider is that when you focus on what you believe is a negative outcome and you fixate on that, you lose the opportunity to look at everything else that's happening. What if you thought about all the ways that you are helping to save lives right now, if you are? By washing your hands, by practicing social distancing or staying home, by helping out an elderly neighbor, by helping out your parents, by taking care of your kids.

Whatever it is you're doing, what if you focused on creating and passing love? Not focused on creating and passing danger. Those are going to feel so totally different. I'm going to talk a little bit more about the difference between acting from fear and acting from love. This pandemic is giving us an opportunity to confront the truth, which is that the universe has changed and everything else is an illusion.

It feels scary, that idea, so we resist it, but it only feels scary because we're still half-holding onto it. When you're truly willing to accept that, you're going to see so much of your fear melt away, I think we have to start there. We can't get into like, what are the brain hacks, what should I do about social media. I'm going to talk about those in a minute, but all of those are the A-line of the model.

Like, one simple hack for reducing anxiety, or limit your social media to 10 minutes or whatever it is, it's the A-line. We got to start up in the thought and the feeling like, we have to let go of the illusion that we can control anything 100%, including our own lives. And it is paradoxically, that is so freeing to remember that has always been the case. You have never had control over that. You don't have it now and you never have and you never will.

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All we have is the time that we have, whatever that time is, which we cannot ever know, and how we want to show up during it. And that is such a weight off. So once we are a little more in that place, then we can start to think about how we want to think about what's happening in a more concrete way.

So, just as an example, I had been reading the news and keeping up with everything, and decided in the middle of last week that it was a good idea for me to cut my trip home, come home, start practicing social distancing in order to slow the spread of the virus. I made that decision out of looking at the circumstances, understanding them, and then out of what felt like love for me and for my fellow humans, right? Not out of anxiety, fear, panic. You can take action without feeling so panicked and crazy, right? And the thing is if you take action from feeling fear you'll still feel afraid, even when you've taken the action, right? It doesn't change it. So you have to be very careful to distinguish between taking action, which is something we can do from a variety of emotions and how we want to do it, whether from fear or from love, whether from catastrophizing or from looking at data, and acknowledging what we can't control and then working on what we can control.

And because things are changing quickly, I don't even know what the situation will be when you all listen to this, but I do recommend that you make sure that you're educated about what's going on and that you make your decisions accordingly. Don't just listen to what everyone else is saying because some of you are surrounded by people saying there's no big deal and no one needs to do anything. And then some of you are surrounded by doomsday preppers, right? And you want to look it up, read the news, understand the actual circumstances, and then decide from whatever emotion you want to be cultivating, how you want to think and feel and act. And for me, that is engaging in social distancing, which I believe is necessary to help protect our public health resources.

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Let's talk about what happens to your brain when there is kind of a pandemic panic happening. So you have to remember, your primitive brain is always looking for information that is relevant to its survival. This is what it is designed to do. And right now, some of you think that this is very serious and real. More than the other things that you used to worry about.

But I really want to encourage you to remember, it's your same brain. Your brain is always looking for threats. Last week it was your boss and your dating life. This week it's a virus. It's still your brain. I think the biggest mistake you can make is to think that because number one, it's medical, or number two, everybody else is freaking out, that means your brain has suddenly become a super reliable objective observer and analyzer that is doing a great job right now.

No. Your brain is not like, bad at every day, great in a crisis. Your brain is the same. So I'm going to give you an example because I have noticed in my own brain, which is of course, also being crazy because it's a brain, that I'm not worried about me dying, which okay, you could say that was statistically a safe bet because I'm in the lowest category.

But I'm not that worried about my family members dying, even though some of them are in a higher risk category. What am I worried about? And by this, I don't mean what do I actually think is more important on a true level. I mean, what is my brain fixating about. My brain is fixating about my romantic relationship.

My boyfriend's in New York for a month. He's traveling around teaching workshops. My brain is obsessed with thinking about how this pandemic is going to impact him and our relationship. Again, why? Not because that actually is the most important thing in the world that I could think about right now, or anything I can do anything about.

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No. It's just because romantic relationships are the area that I have taught my brain to think about for a long time, and that's where I've been doing the most thought work before this all started. And so that's just what my brain is used to thinking about. That's what I've trained it to focus on, so that's what it's doing.

It's not making a logical assessment of the situation and allocating its concern proportionally. It's for sure not focusing on the part that I can do anything about at all because I not only cannot control what happens to me, I for sure cannot control what happens to him or his behavior. I'm not focusing on that because it's a smart, good thing to focus on.

I mean, when I use my prefrontal cortex to decide what to focus on, that's not what I focus on. But if I just let my brain run wild and I'm not managing it, that's where it goes. It's just doing its usual thing, and that is so important to realize. If you look at your thoughts about the pandemic, about the virus, about Covid-19 existing or whatever it is, you are going to see that whatever patterns were happening for you in other areas are happening here.

Like if you have a lot of scarcity thinking about resources, you are probably freaking out about stockpiling groceries. You have a lot of medical anxiety; you're freaking out about that. Your brain is just doing what your brain does. Just like changing a job or changing a relationship, you end up having the same thoughts as you did in your last job or as you did in your last relationship.

We can swap out pandemic for no pandemic, but surprise, your brain is basically the same. It just has a new hook to hang its hat on and a new way to pretend that all of a sudden, it's super reliable and you should totally believe it. And as I've been saying, one of the reasons this is so challenging right now is that social media and the news are really amplifying all of your scary thoughts.

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So here is two things you need to remember about that kind of echo chamber, one is that the media makes money with eyeballs. And right now it's very easy to get eyeballs with constant updates. I'm not saying the media - this is not a conspiracy theory. I'm not saying the media is manufacturing anything.

I'm just saying that it is - people are, by nature, because they're obsessed with looking for threats to their survival and now they're being told there's a threat to their survival and they're being told that there are hourly breaking updates about the threat to their survival. I mean, it's like heroin for your brain. It's completely addictive.

And the media is doing their job, which is to create news and get advertising, so we have this sort of - there's this external circumstance or situation, context being created that just makes it so much easier for what your brain was already like, to amplify itself.

And if you're on social media, everybody on social media is also freaking out. And it's not disproportionate. It's like there's bias selection because the people not freaking out are not on social media not freaking out really, but all the people freaking out are on social media freaking out.

Again, this has nothing to do with what the actual circumstances are, or even what preparations you might want to make or not make. And again, I'm going to talk about decision-making in a minute. It's just to say that there's no situation in which spending all of your time and energy ramping up your primitive brain, ramping up your cortisol, ramping up your panic response constantly is a good idea.

It is not going to help you and you're not learning anything. You already, especially if you have kind of decided on what your plan is, if you are making a plan - let's say you've decided to practice social distancing and you can work from home or you've been told to work from home or

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whatever it is, and you've decided that's what you're going to do. You don't need news updates every 15 minutes. What's going to change?

You can check the news once or twice a day. You'll learn what you need to know and probably you don't even need to know that. Don't ever resist, but notice how your brain tries to convince you that you just really need the newest information immediately, as if that's going to make any difference in the actual decision you would make in this moment or in your life in this moment.

When you live in that online echo chamber, you get very disconnected from yourself and your actual life. So I do really recommend that you limit the amount of time that you spend on social media and the news, and that you plan to coach yourself afterwards. When you're living in a world of virtual panic, I think that you miss out on a lot.

I've actually been using for myself the phrase - a sort of like a weird version of coaching and a Mary Oliver poem, but I've been saying to myself, "Back to the animal body." Whenever I feel that kind of stress system response coming because of what my brain is doing of thinking about things that are not happening right now. Thinking about things that happening in other places or what might happen or what's coming, I just say, "Back to the animal body."

It just reminds me that I am in a body right now. Right now my body still exists. Whatever experience it's having, which is all we are ever guaranteed, this moment, I can breathe, I can stretch, I can move. It's actually kind of great to have a pet and look at my cat and be like, he is not having Covid-19 anxiety. He is just in his animal body and when I can be in my animal body, it brings me back to the present moment.

Your brain likes to think ahead and look for problems to solve, and that's part of the problem with this constant news deluge and going online

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constantly to look for the latest news and see what other problems other people may have identified, your brain likes to look for problems to solve and we want to solve future problems.

We make up future problems in our mind and then we want to solve them. And we want to do that because we think that'll make us feel safe. So we create anxiety for ourselves. We think, what if there's a problem out there I don't know about? I should find out what the problems are.

Then we go online, we read about what might happen, we get freaked out, then we try to solve the problem in our mind, which either we can't do it all or we come up with what our solution will be, we feel better for like, 30 seconds, maybe half an hour, but then we just repeat it all over again.

That is what I have really noticed is that it becomes an ever-escalating game. I'll read something, I'll have anxiety, I'll come up with a solution for whatever problem I just invented in my brain, or whatever problem I can't solve that has nothing to do with me that's outside in the world, I'll feel better for a little bit, and then the whole cycle will begin again.

And notice like, all of this problem solving is all mental. It's not actually producing any action in the world. There are concrete actions we can take in deciding how to deal with this circumstance or any circumstance. But once those have been decided and when we decide those from a managed mind, then all the rest of forecasting and hypothesizing about future problems that may or may not happen so that we can try to solve them in our brains is just not productive.

It's only productive if what happens is something occurs to you as a potential future circumstance, you decide ahead of time that you want to have a plan for that, you make a plan, then you should stop thinking about it. It's like this happened to me where I decided I wanted to have a car in case I wanted to go upstate and my brother took my car, already went



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upstate. I was like, oh, I should just rent a car in case I want to leave the city, or if I need to go be with my parents or whatever else is happening.

That's just math, right? That took 10 minutes. I might want to have a car. I don't have one now. Let me rent a car. I'm willing to spend this amount of money to do it. Rented the car, haven't thought about it since. That's actually - and again, that's still a hypothetical problem, but that's solving it for myself and then not thinking about it ever again.

If you are ruminating, constantly thinking about the same "problem," constantly trying to "solve" it in your mind, come up with a plan and constantly revisiting it, you're not actually solving a problem. You're just making up a problem, not solving it, and ruminating about it.

So then you really have to look at why. Probably because you're trying to get to emotional safety from solving a problem which will never work. You can never take action or plan to take action to create emotional safety. I'm going to talk a little bit about that more too.

Here's the other thing. This is a lot of information, but I think it's all important. If you really just can't or don't want to stop ruminating, then I recommend you just decide that you're ruminating. Just own it, honestly. Just be like, you know what, I am going to read the news constantly. I am going to worry about things I can't control. I am going to spend all my time stressed out. I'm going to do that. That's what I want to do.

It's like owning your buffering, which is kind of what it is. Just do that. Just own it. Don't act like it's out of your control. Just decide that you're going to obsessively monitor the news and worry. I promise you, even that will feel kind of wildly different if you decide to do it on purpose.

But I recommend that you limit your news and social media consumption. I think especially when you're home, it can feel like it's connection somehow

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to be on social media. If you want social media, get in The Clutch Facebook group. Go in there. Talk to other people who are managing their minds.

Do some thought work on something else in your life, or do thought work on this, or call a friend or talk to somebody in your home or talk to your pet. Read a novel. I've been reading a lot of poetry actually, and in fact, I have a Facebook post now where people are adding their poems. Like some non-pandemic connection.

If you do call a friend or you want to talk to someone in your house, don't just talk about Covid-19. Set a time limit for that. Like we're allowed to talk about it for seven minutes, and then we got to talk about something else. Constantly ruminating about it out loud to other people will not feel any better than ruminating about it to yourself.

And if you're going to constantly watch the news and worry, or you're going to even just check it twice a day or whatever it is, be prepared to coach yourself. Don't just be like, I'll just look and see if anything upsetting has happened, and then look and freak out.

Just like having a hangover. Just plan to coach yourself. If you're going to have an emotional hangover, plan to coach yourself afterwards. Plan to take care of yourself that way. And that really kind of brings me to the last important thing I want to touch on before I take some questions or coach you guys, which is that thought work, even about your own illness, your own potential death, other people's potential deaths, which again, have always been something that could happen, that circumstance has not changed, that is not a situation where thought work isn't important. Thought work is the most important.

I always go back to this quote from Viktor Frankl who's a holocaust survivor who said, "The last of human freedoms is to choose one's own attitude in

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any given set of circumstances. To choose one's own way." And that is what thought work is. That is why thought work is so important right now.

How do you want to show up in the world? How do you want to show up for yourself and for others at any day of your life, no matter what's happening outside? How do you want to show up? How do you want to experience that time you have? What do you want to experience? And however many days you have left on this earth, which are never guaranteed?

Your mental health impacts your physical health, it impacts your immune system, it's a necessity. Now, that doesn't mean that then you should start stressing out about how if you're anxious, you're damaging your immune system. There's a big difference between uncontrolled, unmanaged mind, just resisted anxiety, that is all very stressful.

If you are allowing your emotions, they are not dangerous to you. But it's just again to say that your mental health and emotional health are a necessity, and right now, here's what we're doing. We are all neglecting our mental and emotional health and like, running it over with a steam truck, chasing after our fears about our physical health.

Doesn't make sense, right? And it's not going to be effective or helpful. You may get sick. People you love may get sick. That has always been true, it always will be true. Nothing about that has changed. But your panic and your fear and leaning into that, which is what a lot of you are doing, because everyone else seems to be, and believing that it's useful or valuable or that it just sort of has to happen because the circumstance has changed, it's not useful.

Panic and fear are useful for saving your life when it comes down to the kind of thing your primitive brain evolved for, like jumping out of the way of a bus is the time that kind of intense emotional startle is helpful. But that's when in that limited circumstance, immediate frantic action does actually

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help you. But that's not what modern dangers are about. It's not how viruses work.

Don't let your brain and other people convince you that hysteria is going to keep you safe or that somehow you can't manage your mind about this or that everything has changed now everything is different and so all of it is terrible and frightening and scary. It's always just a circumstance. You always get to decide what to think about it.

And when you lean into that fear and anxiety and hysteria, what's so damaging I think is that that's presented as being responsible. Now again, remember the thought feeling line, not the same as the action line. You might decide to take certain actions or certain preparations, but they don't have to do anything to do with being panicked, afraid, or hysterical.

Those emotions are never responsible, I don't think. They don't ever produce a good outcome for you or anyone else. They just lead you to make rash decisions just to get a few moments of relief. It's like a binge or something, but it actually distorts your perception and your ability to make the decisions you want to make and show up the way you want to show up.

There's that whole episode on fear and safety, which I think is a good one for you all to revisit because all we want is to feel safe about ourselves or other people. It's always still just our own emotion that we want to feel safe, and the only way to feel safe in any circumstance is managing your mind because safety is an emotional state.

You need to coach yourself. You need to do your thought work. You need to get coaching from and the other coaches in The Clutch and from the other chickens in the Facebook group. Most of your Facebook feed right now is full of panic and that is not serving you. Make whatever plans you want to make, do whatever prep you want to do, but if you're going to hang out on social media, I want you to hang out in The Clutch Facebook group.

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Now more than ever, you need to be connecting with people who are managing their minds, not only connecting with other people who aren't. I think that this experience, as uncomfortable as it is, like all growth experiences is really a call to be present in our current moment.

There's so much that is unknown right now. Personally, on a national level, on a global level, we don't know what's coming. But the truth is that's always been the case. We have never known what was coming. But now we are forced to be present with that.

And for a lot of us, we have a lot of downtime to be present with that because our lives are changing. So all we can know ever is how we want to show up right now. How can we take care of ourselves and each other right now in this moment? And this is where I think love comes in.

We know what it looks like to act from fear. It's agitated, it's urgent. You only get temporary relief. If you train your brain to be afraid, you will always find something to be afraid about, and you will be in that escalating cycle that I described where you freak yourself out, you get afraid, then you get a little bit of safety somehow by solving the problem in your brain or whatever it is, then you find a new one.

You'll just always be doing that. You can never act your way to emotional safety, and you can't think your way there by solving problem after problem. You can only think your way to emotional safety by letting go of trying to control the things you can't control, and knowing that what you can do is always practice allowance and acceptance of your lack of control.

The only way to experience that I think, you can experience it from a neutral acceptance, you can also experience it from creating and acting on love. I do not think that love is unrealistic or delusional or being in denial. You might want to read some data, you might want to consider some possibilities, you might want to make some decisions out of love right now.

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You might want to prepare in certain ways because of love. It'll feel very different than acting out of fear. Fear always pretends to be urgent and right, but love is all that we really want to feel. Safe and loving and loved, and those feelings come from us no matter what the circumstance is. That has not changed.

Our daily lives may change, our finances may change, our family may change because of this illness, or for a thousand other reasons that we can't predict that is always true. It was also always true that the illness was coming. None of that controls our thoughts.

We can decide to think everything is worse or everything is better or that it's all neutral. We always get to choose what to decide. And for me, I just always want to show up from love. Whatever happens to me, I don't think I will ever regret doing that. And I actually wrote myself a little pandemic mission statement which I will share with you all because I think it could be a good exercise for you to do the same.

It's really just writing a couple of affirmations or thoughts that I want to practice really, and I'm reading it every morning and whenever my brain tries to grab the wheel and spin the current circles. So this is mine. Yours might be different.

My job is to show up and love, to love my students and be a guide and teacher for them during an experience none of us have had before, to love my family and my boyfriend from afar while we are separated, to love my brain and its anxious thoughts, to love all the people I've never met and am trying to protect by staying home. To love this unpredictable human life, which is always full of change because certainty is an illusion. That is the work of living a conscious life, and I choose to love it.

Okay. So, that's what I wanted to share with you guys. I will answer some questions. Somebody says, "I have a few underlying health issues that I've

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not addressed, which makes me scared that I will die if I contract the virus. I feel like my own decisions can keep me safe, and I'm having obsessive thoughts about the precautions, or lack of, by other people around me."

That's a great question and you're wrong in both ways. You believe that your own decisions can keep you safe, which may or may not be true, right? Yes, we can mitigate risk to some extent, but we don't always know, right? You could wear a seatbelt and end up in an accident where the seatbelt is worse for you. You can wash your hands a lot and stay home, and then... I don't know, trip in your own home when you wouldn't have if you were out. I mean, that's the whole point, right? We cannot control it all.

So, the most poisonous thought you have... Actually, you think your problem thought is that other people aren't taking precautions, but I think your problem thought is that your own decisions can keep you safe and that that's where you're basing your emotional safety on, is believing that you can control if you ever get sick or not, from this or anything else, and I don't think that that's true. Right? It feels scary to admit that, but actually, if you let go of that belief and you accept that you can do what you can, but that you can't control whether that happens or not, now, or any time, I think you'll feel more free.

Okay. I'm going to focus on questions that just... Since this webinar was about this situation that are about really this. How do I make peace with the things I can't control? I want you to rewatch the webinar, right? That is the eternal question. Listen to the episode on uncertainty, which is I think 107. The whole reason we want to control things is we think if we control them, then we could feel okay. It's exactly the opposite, right? You have to stop putting your emotional state on things outside of you. That's what you're trying to control them.

Okay. So she says, "Any advice for managing thoughts around my investment funds dropping?" It's a great question. I think the stock market is so fascinating, because it's all just thoughts. Nothing has happened yet,



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right? But the market collapses and then it bounce back. It's just people's thoughts all over the place. So honestly, I would just not look at that shit right now. Right? We are in a time of a lot of upheaval. You are probably not planning to liquidate all your investment funds in the next three weeks, so I just wouldn't even look at them, or look at them and manage your mind, either way, but... Yeah, I guess that's just changing the circumstance, but for me that's actually... The thought work is to stop thinking that it's useful or a good idea to monitor them minute-by-minute. You're monitoring them because you want to have a feeling and believe something, and you think looking at them is going to help you with that, but you're getting the opposite result, right?

Either do the thought work to not look at them, which will be hard for you, or do the thought work to look at them and not care what they say, but you can take that in either direction, pick one, but just make sure you're... The big question is, "Why am I looking at this? Why do I think it needs to be different? What do I think that I would get to think and feel now by looking at this money that I wasn't planning to use for years anyway, probably?"

Somebody says, "What happens if your new side job is social media management and you are drawn to looking at stories about the virus?" What do you mean drawn to? They're not like the sirens on the shore. They're not drawing you. You are choosing to read them. Yes, if your job involves looking at news sites or social media, then things are going to go by you, but people go by you on the street and you don't jump them, even when you're drawn to them. So you got to... Don't call it being drawn to it, like you don't have any control over it. You've got to take ownership and decide, "Am I going to look at these or not, and how am I going to think about them?"

"Any advice about how we can help other people when we clearly cannot help everyone, and they are going to be a lot of people who need help?" Okay. So you want to know what my action line is here, right? I'm going to

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coach you on your thoughts. I think this thought, "We clearly cannot help everyone," to you seems like a circumstance, but it's not helping you. Right? It's not getting you a good result. What if your thought was, "I can't wait to see how many creative ways I can come up with to help people?" You see what I'm saying? You don't have to believe you can help everyone. That's not the only option. It's not, "I can or can't help everyone." It's just by starting your thought process with, "We can't help everyone, and a lot of people need help," it's like you're already starting from scarcity. "There's more people that need help. I can't help them all," and then of course you feel overwhelmed. You don't know how to make any decisions, because you're asking yourself to do something that seems impossible.

You're starting from scarcity. What if you switch that and you started from, "I'm so glad that I have," whatever it is, "the time, the money, the resources, the training, the teaching, whatever, to help people. How can I get this out there? What's the next thing I could do to help someone? What's the most creative way I can help people?" Ask yourself a more positive question that will help.

"Advice for dealing with others' reactions or actions? This issue particularly partners with the limited social interaction and potentially lockdown. My partner's seriously catastrophizing." Yeah, you got to manage your own mind. He's allowed to catastrophize. The news is catastrophizing. So what? Right? You got to do the thought work first and then you'll know whether you want to take any action or not about it, but you got to let go of the idea that he shouldn't catastrophize, right?

You're like, "This is a problem. He's catastrophizing. I'm not catastrophizing. I'm just mad that he's catastrophizing." Well, but you're catastrophizing about him. Who cares? He's allowed to catastrophize. He's allowed to think what he wants. What do you want to think? Then you'll know how you want to feel and act about it. Okay, I know I didn't get to everybody's questions, but that's why it's perfect you are all on the Clutch. You can post them on

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the Facebook group, submit them to Ask the Coaches. I encourage you to. Same for all you people who want to get coached. We have about 15 more minutes. I'm going to coach some of you, but I want the rest of you to post in the Facebook group, or submit to Ask the Coaches. All right, let's do this thing.

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Speaker 1: Hello.

Kara Loewentheil: Hi.

Speaker 1: Thanks for taking me.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. Of course.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Something that you said earlier really rang true for me, which was, "Whatever patterns your mind already has about the topic it obsesses about," rang true, and that really struck a chord for me. My husband and I are self-employed with a landscaping business and money stress. Now I'm like, "Oh no, the economy, small business," and we're in recovery mode from a home reno and our lines of credit are already extended, and we're like, "Oh my God. We're going to sink." Not to mention, I'm trying to get pregnant, so now what? And yeah-

Kara Loewentheil: Okay. So, there is a difference-

Speaker 1: ... there's tons of fear.

Kara Loewentheil: ... between your brain and my brain right now. You always think-

Speaker 1: Pardon?

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Kara Loewentheil: ... there's scarcity, so that's what you came up with. My first thought was like, "Well, people are going to be staying home. They going to really want their lawns to look good probably. If you're willing to go do their lawns, they'll have something nice to look at."

Speaker 1: Yeah, and it's a low social contact job, which is nice.

Kara Loewentheil: There you go, right? Now I'm not saying I know that that's true, but just that's the difference in the way our brains are approaching this, right? [crosstalk 00:06:18] to just take all the thoughts you already had. You were already worried about your business, right? You already had the phrase, "We're recovering from a renovation," like it was a terrible thing that happened to you that you're now recovering from, as opposed to-

Speaker 1: Yeah. No, it's actually the best. Today we were like, "Oh, the house is so great, but also we're in debt."

Kara Loewentheil: So this is a proven example, right? You're forecasting a future problem, and then trying to solve it in your mind through anxiety.

Speaker 1: Yeah. As if that's ever worked.

Kara Loewentheil: Right. It's never worked before, right?

Speaker 1: No.

Kara Loewentheil: Have you ever solved problems in the past when they came up?

Speaker 1: Yeah. I like to think of myself actually as a great problem solver, but a very-

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Kara Loewentheil: Oh. Okay, but so what if-

Speaker 1: ... Yeah, but not my own problems. I'm great at other people's problems.

Kara Loewentheil: Okay. Why don't we just call this your husband's problem then, and then you can solve it for him. But I just want you to think about how different would it be if you believed that whatever challenge comes up, you'll be able to resolve it.

Speaker 1: That would feel like the feeling of lightness that just washed over me and was kind of... Wow. Actually, that would be amazing if I believed that.

Kara Loewentheil: Okay, but you do believe it, because if you just got a feeling that washed over you, that means you believe it. You just haven't been practicing that thought at all.

Speaker 1: No.

Kara Loewentheil: No. So your work is to practice that thought.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That I can solve any problem that comes our way?

Kara Loewentheil: yeah.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kara Loewentheil: If you feel a feeling of relief, that means you believe it. You just got to practice it.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Okay.

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Kara Loewentheil: Right? And here's the other thing to remember, solving a problem actually happens in the T line. It's just thoughts, right? If we can manage our minds, we can solve any problem.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: If we're not managing our minds, we can't solve any problem, no matter how small it is. Right? How many of you have not been able to get a jar open, freaked out. Right?

Speaker 1: Or my dog is begging me for a walk and I don't have the time to take him, and it makes me feel full of rage.

Kara Loewentheil: Right. When you are not managing your mind, there's no problem too small for you to not be able to solve.

Speaker 1: Yeah, yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: Right?

Speaker 1: That's a good point. Yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: But if you are managing your mind, even halfway, there's no problem you can't solve, right? So-

Speaker 1: Yeah. Well, thank goodness for all us lucky people, I guess, who found thought work before all this. What a great tool to have.

Kara Loewentheil: Well, no kidding, but even who can find it now. I think this is the greatest opportunity for people to find the work, right? So yeah, I recommend that you just start thinking of yourself as a bad ass problem solver.

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Speaker 1: Yeah. It's superhero mode, of like-

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. "Yeah, I can solve any problem-"

Speaker 1: ... "You know what? It's good. It's fine."

Kara Loewentheil: ... "I got this."

Speaker 1: Yeah. It's a fine line though between where my mind just went with, "Oh, okay. Well..." Yeah, there's that, but then, I don't want to be one of those people who's like, "Everything's fine. Nothing to worry about. Everything's going to be just fine."

Kara Loewentheil: You think it should be... It's much better to be like, "There's a lot to worry about and we're not going to be fine. It can be terrible." Why is that better?

Speaker 1: Well, no. It's certainly not better, but I [crosstalk 00:00:08:49]-

Kara Loewentheil: Because what does okay mean, right? We're not saying nobody will get sick or die. You know what? Before we heard about coronavirus, that would have been an untrue statement also.

Speaker 1: Yeah, yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: People were always going to get sick and pass away. This is what happens to human beings, right?

Speaker 1: Yeah. It doesn't matter if it's better to be like, "Everything's fine," or, "Everything's on fire. It's a dumpster fire." What matters is how I'm showing that. That's just the bottom line.



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Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. What result are you going to get? This is what's so crazy about our brains, right? This is the problem with this, we all want to be like everybody else, and we don't want anyone else to think badly of us, so if everybody else is freaking out then we're like, "Well, I don't want to be a person who's not freaking out. What will all the other people who are freaking out think?" That's like, "The people who drink poison are in the poison club, and I don't want to not drink the poison because the people in the poison club are going to think badly of me for not joining the poison club." Meanwhile, do you think they recommend that infectious disease doctors freak the fuck out? Is that a good way for them to help other people?

Speaker 1: No.

Kara Loewentheil: No. If you do want to help others, do we think the best way is to drink the poison, or to not drink the poison?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Not drink the poison.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. You have to be willing to not be like everybody else.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. That takes courage, and it's like, [crosstalk 00:00:09:53]-

Kara Loewentheil: Good thing you're a superhero though.

Speaker 1: Yeah, totally. But a neutral superhero.

Kara Loewentheil: Neutral superhero. That is like lemmings going over a cliff, right?

Speaker 1: Yeah.

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Kara Loewentheil: And what happens when panic and anxiety is up, there's actually like 12 other ways you could run. Yes, sometimes you have to go over the cliff I guess, but we don't even give ourselves a chance to solve a problem when we just go to that panic and anxiety. And then, because we are social creatures and want acceptance and everybody around us is anxious, we're looking to other people to decide how we should think and feel, right?

Speaker 1: Right.

Kara Loewentheil: We're like, "Oh, my third-grade teacher, who I really respect, they're freaking out, so I should freak out too."

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: Right? And the really important thing to understand is freaking out, your emotion line, is very different from the thought that creates freak out. That's totally different than saying, "I agree that these are the epidemiological facts," or something. Right? Same circumstance. We can all look at the same chart, that could be the circumstance, and we could both believe it's true, but then what's our thought about that, right? Not freaking out doesn't mean that you are saying, "It's a conspiracy theory and there is no virus of any kind."

Speaker 1: Yeah. "I'm going to stop washing my hands."

Kara Loewentheil: "All illnesses are caused by aliens," whatever. Right. Of course, right. Personally, I am washing my hands. I'm-

Speaker 1: Me too.

Kara Loewentheil: ... practicing social distancing, based on my understanding, which might be different from someone else's, but I don't

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have to panic to do any of that. Right? Refusing to panic or be anxious does not mean not looking at the circumstances in the world and then deciding how you want to act about them, but we all think because everybody else is panicking, that that's part of the process and that's helping in some way.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Yeah. I think that's a major distinction of taking responsibility about our actions to stay safe, and also staying vigilant with our minds to not go down that catastrophizing rabbit hole.

Kara Loewentheil: And safety is an emotion too, right? That's why I'm saying, how does it feel to act from love? To me, trying to act from fear would be, "Oh God, what if I get it? What if I pass it to someone? Then I'm going to feel so terrible, even though I'll probably still be alive," but that... Right? All of that creates so much fear. I might take-

Speaker 1: Oh God, yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: ... the same action as the other person. My result will be totally different because my thought is different. Right? So that person will not feel any safer at all, no matter what actions they take. Right? Although they take those actions, the result they create for themselves is still going to be feeling terrible. Then trying to take more and more actions to try to feel safe that still won't work. Right? Whereas my thought is, to show up from love means to do what I think I can based on what I understand, but knowing I cannot control it. My safety has to come from my own emotional thought process. I have to be comfortable, just as a human, with the fact that life is totally unpredictable and anything could happen to me or people I love. We all mostly go around completely avoiding that.

Speaker 1: Yeah. It's pretty major and this is a big opportunity to confront that in our own minds. That mission statement you shared I thought was really powerful. I was very moved by it. I teared up at it. It's pretty major to

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choose those thoughts in a time like this. It's very... I think I want to... I'm going to go back and rewatch it and take notes and put it [crosstalk 00:12:39]-

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah, I'll post it in the group, but exactly. I think this is an opportunity for us to grapple with the truth that is always there, which is that life is uncertain and unpredictable, and we get to decide how to show up. Right? That has always been true. It's not like the virus even created that for us. It's been true, and here's the other wild thing, everybody on this call came to this call because they're freaking out, right? There's people somewhere else, not freaking out at all, right? For them, the virus is not creating that opportunity. Maybe something else in their life will or not. Right? The other problem with the echo chamber is, again, it's not about what the facts are, but it's like, "What are the different ways?" It's still just a circumstance. People are having a lot of different experiences, so we still get to decide what's the experience I want to have. It is optional. How do I want to think and feel about it? Yeah. All right. Thank you for sharing.

Speaker 1: Thank you.

Kara Loewentheil: You're welcome.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: Okay. Let's do one more.

Speaker 2: Oh, hi.

Kara Loewentheil: Hi. How are you?

Speaker 2: I'm good. How are you?

Kara Loewentheil: Good. Tell me what's happening in your brain.

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Speaker 2: Well, it's interesting what you said at the beginning of the webinar. Well, the one thing I think that I stress the most out about is money, and that's totally what's been coming up with this virus for me-

Kara Loewentheil: Really?

Speaker 2: It hasn't even really hit New Zealand yet, big time. I've only had... One client had to cancel coming this week, because she's been in Jakarta, so she has to self-isolate. But it hasn't really affected my business yet, and yet I just keep thinking it's going to, and that's the one thing that I worry the most about. Even though I have young kids, I'm doing things like getting her to hand wash, and I'm not taking my daughter to movies today, and doing things like that, but the thing that comes up the most and gives me that feeling in my stomach of worry is that I won't have enough money.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah, but you were already feeling that before this happened.

Speaker 2: Yes. Definitely.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. Right? So your brain is like, "Oh, but now the World Health Organization is involved, so now these thoughts and fears are totally true."

Speaker 2: Yes.

Kara Loewentheil: Even though they're not actually true yet. Nothing has happened to you.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Kara Loewentheil: Right?

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Speaker 2: Yes.

Kara Loewentheil: And you can see if you keep believing that what's going to happen, right? You're just going to keep producing whatever result those thoughts produce.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: Right?

Speaker 2: Yes.

Kara Loewentheil: And then you might make less money, and then you'll be like, "See, it was because of COVID, maybe not because I stopped showing up at my business, because I totally thought it wasn't worth it." Tell me what you do.

Speaker 2: I'm a personal trainer and a Pilates instructor.

Kara Loewentheil: Okay. So, your feeling is nobody will care about being healthy ever again, so that's just it for you.

Speaker 2: I think because I run... I have a little studio, a little private training studio, and I run classes and have private clients. So, yeah. The other thing that I've tried, in my mind for the last 10 years, I've been like, "I should do online training. I should do online training," and then I finally started online training about a year ago, and it hasn't taken off at all, but I haven't put any work into it, so I don't know why I expect it to take off.

Kara Loewentheil: You were like, "I put a website up, where my clients?"

Speaker 2: Pretty much.

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Kara Loewentheil: Let's just think about this. This might be crazy, but what if you made more money because of COVID?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: Is that possible?

Speaker 2: It is.

Kara Loewentheil: How would that happen?

Speaker 2: It is. I don't know if I believe it. I say that out loud, but [crosstalk 00:15:27]-

Kara Loewentheil: No, but tell me how could that happen? Let's just take... Maybe it's not you, it's some other Pilates instructor who started an online business and then did nothing with it. How is it possibly true that a change in people's behavior might give them an opportunity to make money instead of lose money?

Speaker 2: Well, I guess there's a lot of people that are going to be stuck at home, and so online training's a perfect avenue.

Kara Loewentheil: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That seems right to me.

Speaker 2: So, yeah. So then, yeah, creating that online presence, starting to actually put that effort in online.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. Why have you not done that?

Speaker 2: I think because I find lots of little things, lots of little reasons why no one would... why I'm not good enough. I think it's probably that.

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Kara Loewentheil: But why are you doing that? You show up to teach your classes in person, right? What's your thought about that?

Speaker 2: I do. It varies. It's really interesting, because I have two sessions. I have a Monday night class, two classes back-to-back, and they're almost fully booked, and a Wednesday morning class. There's two, and they're both almost fully booked. Those classes are always very busy, and that's very uplifting to me, but I never [crosstalk 00:00:16:34]-

Kara Loewentheil: Because why? What's your thought about it?

Speaker 2: ... positive things. My thought is-

Kara Loewentheil: Which is?

Speaker 2: Well, it's interesting, because then I teach my Friday morning class and only one person shows up, and I have only three people in that class. That makes me feel like I'm not a good instructor-

Kara Loewentheil: No.

Speaker 2: ... That's my thought.

Kara Loewentheil: No, no. Your thought is that you're not a good instructor, and you temporarily swayed your own thought by looking at the number on Mondays and Wednesdays, but you're giving the people who come to class the authority over how you feel. Do you become significantly worse at your job on Fridays? Do you lose all your knowledge about Pilates? You forget how the reformer works on Fridays?

Speaker 2: No.



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Kara Loewentheil: No. You're the same that's teaching Pilates on every day and different amounts of people show up, but you're like, "Oh, I was good on Monday, but now I'm trash."

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: Right? Because you're so tied to that external validation. Yeah, so of course what you're doing with your online business is you're like, "Well, I started it and nothing happened," so I must be terrible. It's all the same work. If you coach yourself in your Friday class, and you coach yourself about your online thing, it's going to be the same thing.

Speaker 2: Okay.

Kara Loewentheil: Okay? Now a lot of you watching or listening to this are thinking, "Okay, but I don't have an online business, so for me it is going to be disaster," but if I had coached her about something else, you'd be having the opposite thought, right? The point is that if you already were worried about money, you will still be worried about money now, and your brain will just tell you now you have a good enough reason.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Kara Loewentheil: Right? The job is always, "How do I want to think and feel about this?" Not, "Let me just believe my brain when it tells me that this new circumstance is dangerous."

Speaker 2: Okay.

Kara Loewentheil: Right? People who are worried about making money and don't think they can make money, never make money under any conditions, or never think they have enough, whatever, making what they want, whatever it is. Enough is not objective, and people who believe that

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they can make money, make money under different sets of conditions. Right? It's always the thought.

Speaker 2: Yeah, that makes sense. I left the father of my kids this year and he earns a huge amount of money, the top 1% in New Zealand. The one thing, he was very controlling, and a friend of mine just came over for a glass of wine the other night and she said, "Why is he so obsessed about money if he earns so much?" And I don't know, it just... Yeah. So it's interesting.

Kara Loewentheil: It has nothing to do with how much you earn. It has to do with what your thoughts are. Right? He thinks he can earn it, because he does, but then he has some other thought about, whatever, spending it or... Right? We're always just going to create the result with the thought we have.

Speaker 2: Yes. Yes. Yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Kara Loewentheil: All right. You know you got your work to do.

Speaker 2: Yes, I do. Yeah. Thank you so much-

Kara Loewentheil: You're welcome.

Speaker 2: ... I'm so glad I'm... Thanks, Kara.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. All right, my dears. If we didn't get to answer your question live or coach you live, go post in the Facebook group if you want chicken input, and submit to Ask the Coaches if you want coach input. I will

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post my little manifesto in the group, and I will see you guys in there. All right. Manage your minds. Bye.

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