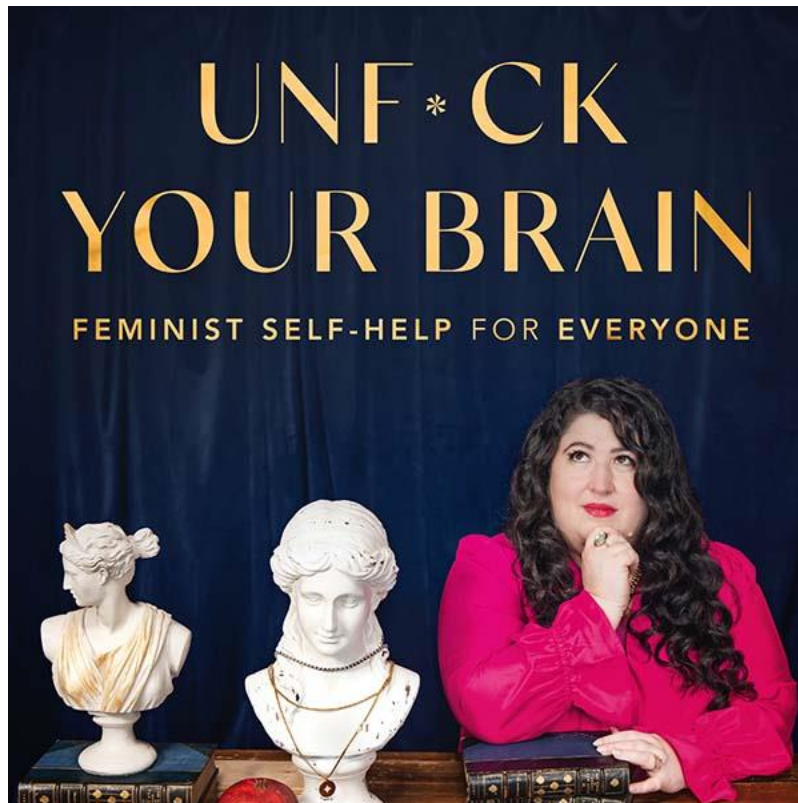


UFYB 378: The Biggest Time Management Problem & How to Solve It



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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Like many of you, I spent some time in late December and early January planning my 2025. Y'all know that I live and die by my calendar and by the time management system I teach inside the Feminist Self-Help Society. But this year, as I was planning my work schedule for 2025, I realized that I had not dealt with all of the over-responsibility in my brain because I realized that I was making decisions that were worse for me and worse for my business because of my attempt to control what other people thought about me.

So in this episode, I'm going to share with you what changes I'm making to my work in 2025 and what self-coaching I had to do to resolve the over-responsibility that was sneakily sabotaging me. Because I guarantee it is sabotaging you too, sneakily or very obviously. So let's get into it.

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 friends, and welcome to 2025. All right, when you're hearing this, it's been 2025 for a minute, but this is the first podcast I'm recording in the new year. And I'm excited to start it off by sharing some of my own self-coaching. The great thing about this job is that anytime I figure out something about myself, I know it's going to be so useful for all of you because every brain is a special snowflake in its own way, but every brain is very similar in many ways, especially if that brain has been socialized as a woman in Western society.

So one of the thought patterns you've heard me talk about a lot in the last six months is over-responsibility. That's the thought pattern that women are taught that teaches us to take too much responsibility for everyone and

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everything around us. We are taught that it's our job to manage and control everything, not just everything about ourselves, including our emotions, our bodies, the natural process of aging, things like that, but also everything else in the world, like other people's feelings.

Not just our own job performance, but the performance of everyone around us. Not just keeping our kids alive, but every thought and feeling and outcome they ever have. Not just our half of our friendships or romantic relationships, but the other person's half too. We're responsible for everything that happens to us, everything that doesn't happen to us, and everything that does or doesn't happen to any of our loved ones either. That's how we feel. It's exhausting. I'm exhausted just describing it.

And I've observed this in so many of my clients and my students, of course, but also in myself. And one of the things about over-responsibility is that it can be really sneaky and yet impact almost every decision you make. So here's where I saw it cropping up in my brain recently and how I coached myself on it.

So one thing I do every year at the beginning of the year is I look at how I'm arranging my calendar, big picture. Like before I get into all of the putting the work on there and the socializing and the downtime and everything else, I just look at what are my big picture distribution of time? What are the overall patterns to my days and are they helping me have the experience of life that I want and produce the outcomes I want from my efforts?

This was a lot simpler when I was single and did not have kids or stepkids. Now that I am married and I'm a step parent, I have been trying different arrangements of workdays and non-workdays to figure out the best way to be present for the different parts of my life at different times.

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Now, I have to do a little self-coaching sidebar for a minute because even as I was writing this episode, my brain wanted me to say I've been struggling with how to do this. But that's a totally optional thought. And it was like a moment for a little mini self-coaching. And I'm sharing it with you because I know it will resonate with you. Just because I haven't gotten it quite how I want it yet or I've tried a few different things and none of them feel quite like what I want yet for this period of my life, that doesn't mean I'm struggling, it's a challenge, I'm having a hard time. Like the struggle is just the emotional resistance to it not being perfect or solved yet.

I can also choose with a lot less drama to just describe it as something I've tried doing a few different ways. I've tried arranging my time a few different ways. I haven't yet hit on an option that I love. So much less drama than like I've been struggling to manage my time or arrange my time. It's such a challenge to arrange my time, right? So much drama. And the truth is, I can also just choose to say, I've tried doing it a few different ways and I'm still experimenting. So that's what I'm choosing to say. I've been trying it a few different ways and I'm still experimenting.

So one set of roles I need time for, right, is my family role. One set is my work role. But even within my work role, there are different aspects to my work, right? And any of you who are a, well, a lot of people have different aspects to their work, especially if you are a business owner and a CEO of a business like mine where you're not just the CEO, you also are the lead on sales and marketing in terms of being the face that's out there, even if you have a team supporting you. You are also the person doing a lot of the content, a lot of the delivery, like delivering the services.

If you're the CEO of a cable company, you are not also starring in the ads and going out to people's houses to lay the cable. But when you are the principal or the CEO of the owner of a coaching business like mine, you are doing all of those things.

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So on the one hand, I'm the CEO who's still pretty in my business. I have a great leadership team. They do a lot of the day-to-day running of things. But I'm not out of the day-to-day. I'm still there creating strategy. I'm still reviewing and approving any significant projects or policy changes. I'm still pretty involved in sales and marketing. And obviously, I'm teaching and coaching and delivering. And I'm the face in any of the marketing, right? Or the voice in the podcast. And so I'm still doing all that.

And at the same time, I'm the visionary. This is from the Entrepreneurial Organizational System model, right? Where you have the visionary, the person who has the ideas and the vision, and then you have the integrator, the person who kind of runs the day-to-day. And I'm sort of part of both of those. So as the visionary, I'm the person who has to have time and mental energy for the big picture. And by definition, that requires creating space and time for big picture thinking, dreaming, visioning, and also learning, exposing my brain to new ideas and integrating them.

And so if I think of my business as having had kind of four stages so far, this was easiest in stage one and stage three. So stage one, I was just starting out, I didn't have any clients yet. So there wasn't that much to do in the business, and there was a lot of time to read and learn and digest and dream and vision and work on the business.

Stage two, I was fully booked with one-to-one clients. I had very little time for anything that was not being in the business. I was doing all my own marketing and admin and delivery and the podcast, and I was coaching all those clients.

Stage three, I had a small team and a smaller high-end program. And our enrollment was automated. I wasn't doing consult calls anymore. We had a really steady stream of applicants. So I was delivering the program and I

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was working in the business, but I had a lot of time to think and reflect and create new things.

And then stage four, which is what I've been in for several years now, I created a bunch of big new things, the membership. I grew my team. I shepherded my business through the pandemic, through an economic downturn. I published a book. I got it on the bestseller list. I was working way more than a standard work week a lot of the time, and it was all in the business. So I actually had very little time or energy available to think big picture, think strategically long term, to work on the business.

I think this is probably just a cycle of life in a business that I will continue repeating, right? A stage of having space to dream and think and vision the next thing, and then an intense work stage of actually creating and running the new thing, getting it up and running, being able to hand it off more than back to spaciousness to think again.

So now it's 2025, book is out and done, our membership is stable, I can pull back and have some bigger picture thinking. But now, because I have a whole team and someone is always wanting to ask me something or have me review something, I have more meetings, all that kind of stuff, in order to create time and space to have that vision, I have to create more clear boundaries around my work time.

If I'm in Slack 10 to 6 every day, and the truth is I start working at, like, 7 AM usually when I get up, so that's, like, after 3 hours of working. And responding to Slacks and emails all the time, I'm never gonna be able to get out of that, like, logistics implementation part of my brain and into the bigger picture vision part of my brain.

I'm also learning more about myself as a step parent and the different kinds of demands on my energy and attention that it takes to be in that role, and

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that's always changing, right, as kids grow and change. So because of all of this, I wanted to reconfigure my schedule in terms of what days I was doing, what kind of work, and what kind of role. I needed some time working in the business still, especially because my sales and marketing director is about to go on maternity leave, and I need time to work on the business. And I need time to be present with my family. And then because I'm me, I need a lot of alone time, like a lot, a lot of alone time. I'm learning that it can be less than I think I need, but it has to really be alone for, like, it to count and, like, resource me. And I need those things distributed in a way that gives me space between each of the other things to kinda reset my brain and my tolerance for stimulation and demands. So that was all the background.

So I came up with what I thought would be the best schedule. I'm not gonna get into the details of it because I don't want anyone thinking like, okay. This is how Kara does it, so that's the best schedule for me too. I've seen that happen with other coaches. When I was a student, I saw people doing that with my coach and my teacher that was like, well, that's how she does it. So that's what we all need to do. She was not saying you all need to do it. But people just take that on themselves.

Right? They think they wanna be like someone's, they think they have to do what they do. So it's not relevant to you exactly how I'm doing my schedule. What's relevant to you is the self coaching that went along with this. So the first level of self coaching was just creating the schedule I wanted to test.

If you've heard the podcast I did about making decisions recently, I was talking about buying a house upstate. And then I just kept thinking, like, someday, my life will align. So it's, like, easy and possible to have a place upstate and be upstate half the week. And that is this powerful moment when I realized, no. That's never going to happen. A house is not just gonna make itself work. I have to decide I'm doing this, and then I have to

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fit my life around it. So the same thing happened here. I knew that I needed to change my schedule, but I kept thinking somehow I'd reach a point where it would just, like, happen naturally or seem more obvious or seem easy.

And taking my lesson from the house issue, the first self coaching I did, this was the easier part of the self coaching, was to tell myself, this is never automatically going to happen. Your schedule is not automatically going to arrange itself, and you're never gonna get to a point where you just happen to have an empty schedule and it seems easy to draw boundaries. Right? If you wanna change it, you have to do it on purpose, and there won't ever be a better time.

So I started from scratch, and this is also really important. I didn't ask myself, well, what seems plausible? I didn't ask I didn't look at the calendar I had and be like, well, what can I make out of this? Because there's stuff on my calendar already that for the next 6, 8 months. Right? I started from scratch. I started from 0. I was like, what is my ideal schedule? And, like, I'll see what I'll have to move to make it happen.

And that, my friends, is when I hit the over responsibility skids in my brain. And my brain freaked out about why I couldn't possibly actually do the schedule I came up with and what everyone would think of me if I tried. So I'm gonna share those brain tantrums and how I coach myself on them after this quick break.

So why did my brain freak out when I made the schedule? The thoughts my brain immediately started spinning in were classic over responsibility. These were the primary themes. 1, I'm lazy and weak. 2, my team is going to be resentful or judge me. 3, my business is going to suffer if I'm not responsive and engaged at all times. 4, other people manage much more than this with much less free time, so I should be able to do that too.

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So let's talk about why these are all over responsibility themes. Number 1, I'm lazy and weak. Why was I telling myself that? Because society has taught women that if they are not on the edge of burnout or breakdown at all times, they are not working hard enough. We've learned that if we need any time off or any downtime or any time to ourselves, we are weak and lazy. That if we don't wanna work all the time, we're not being productive. Because we think productivity is about the amount of time we're doing things.

So if you're working one minute less than anyone else you know or have ever heard of, you're lazy and unproductive. And if you feel burnt out from that, you're weak because women are supposed to be responsible for everything and do it all with a smile on their face and never be tired or annoyed or bored or unproductive.

So the second theme was the idea that my team was going to be resentful or judge me if I was not working in the business eight hours a day, five days a week. This is over responsibility in a couple of ways.

First, I'm taking responsibility for what other people think and feel about me, which I actually can't control. And I'm making that more important than what I actually want or need. And so I clearly had been subconsciously doing this for a while, not changing my schedule the way I wanted to because I wanted to control what other people thought about me. Or to be more accurate, I wanted to control what I thought other people thought about me. I actually have no idea what my employees would have thought or do think now that I've changed this. And that's over-responsibility, thinking that I need to control how they think and feel and believing that I know how they think and feel. Those are over-responsibility.

And of course, I assume that their thoughts were my own thoughts, that I needed to do everything and be responsible for everything and be

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responsive to everyone at all times in order to be accepted and respected, because that's what society teaches women. Men are taught that they deserve authority and respect just for existing or for being experienced or wise or just being men, and women are really not taught that they deserve respect at all and are taught that it's much more important to show that they are incredibly hard workers and then you might get some begrudging respect.

The third kind of theme going on in my brain was that my business would suffer if I wasn't available and responsive all the time. This is so common and I was like I can't believe this is still in my brain because I coach on this all the time. So many women fritter away their time and attention and their energy being available to other people, checking e-mail all the time, checking Slack all the time, responding to everything immediately, right?

Of course, there can be some value in being responsive, especially depending on the business and what's going on or your job or whatever. But the sort of fear that someone will be upset with you if you don't get back to them right away, that is such a time and energy stealer. We think we're responsible for being available anytime anyone wants something from us. And that distracts us and makes it impossible for us to spend time thinking at a higher level.

So my fourth theme, my fourth over-responsibility thought pattern, was that because other people don't have the luxury or privilege of having this much control over their time, I shouldn't take advantage of it. This is also a very sneaky one that I see come up pretty commonly with my clients, and it's one of my brain's absolute favorite tunes, and this is a form of over-responsibility where we feel responsible for all of the world's problems, and we feel responsible for making sure that we don't get too happy or too lucky. It's completely irrational, right?

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None of us are living on the street out of choice because some people don't have access to housing. We are not buying groceries for our family because some families are food insecure. But because women are socialized to believe that they are overly weak and lazy and indulgent and like morally soft, we are always holding ourselves responsible for imposing our own suffering and policing ourselves to make sure that we aren't quote-unquote getting away with something or getting to take it too easy because that's morally bad for a woman.

If a man builds a business to a place where he can work less than 40 hours a week, he writes a book about it and it becomes a bestseller. He becomes a motivational speaker about how to do that. If a woman does it, it's lazy and self-indulgent and like other people are doing the work and she's just getting rich off of that.

And here's the thing. If we have privilege, the thing to do with that privilege is try to make things better for everyone, not make your life worse for yourself for no reason. Try to bring other people up to the level you're experiencing, not artificially suppress yourself down to the most common level of some kind, right?

In this instance, if I find it helpful to have more flexibility in my work schedule, then that's something that I can look at making available to my employees as well in ways that fit their roles, which is something we're doing as a company right now. That makes a lot more sense than not allowing myself to be flexible because if not everyone has a good thing, I shouldn't be allowed to have it either. That's that over-responsibility thought pattern.

So this is a perfect segue to how I coach myself because what I teach is that the antidote to over-responsibility is self-responsibility. This is a really important principle of all cognitive change work. It's very hard to tell

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yourself, or impossible to tell yourself, to just stop doing something. So to try to coach myself to just stop being over-responsible is very vague and my brain doesn't know what that means. Now I could come up with alternative thoughts for each specific scenario, that's effective, but in this case what's even more powerful is to take the principle of self-responsibility and use that as a self-coaching tool and as a lens for how to think about things.

So I looked at my four examples of over-responsibility and I asked myself how focusing on these things that are not my responsibility, other people's thoughts and feelings, world conditions, etc., how was that distracting me from focusing on my self-responsibility? And so here's what I saw when I coached myself on this. I was failing to be responsible to myself and my actual on-the-ground real experiences and emotions. By focusing on my over-responsibility to social norms or what I've been taught or what I imagined other people were thinking, I was ignoring my actual lived reality.

It's absolutely true that some people work more than I want to in my ideal schedule. Some of them probably wish they didn't have to. Some of them may actually thrive that way because our brains and bodies are different. It doesn't really matter. In this brain and this body that I have, there is a way I thrive and a way I don't. I coach around this a lot for folks who are neurodiverse or who have chronic pain, and I have elements of both of those things too, but they're not the focus here because it's true for all of us, right? I am not being self-responsible when I am not thinking about who am I actually in my own brain and body, and how do I show up my best in the world for everyone's benefit?

I was also failing to be responsible for the best outcomes for my business and my team, beyond my responsibility to myself. I'm not the implementer in my business. I am not our project manager. I'm the visionary. If I'm neglecting that role, which only I can do, to be all up in the business doing

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work other people can do because of my over-responsibility, I am not taking self-responsibility for my true responsibility to my business and my team.

I'm pretty sure if you ask my team, they would not say, oh, well, we would rather the business stays where it is and Kara is in Slack 24-7. We'd prefer that than for Kara to take time to think and learn and vision to grow the business which helps us earn bonuses and expand our roles and grow our own professional development and our own income. Which one of those things do we think that my team would actually prefer?

Now, it's important to say, even if for some reason my team would rather that I was in Slack 24-7, that wouldn't be a reason to do it. This is my business I have built and the rational order of things without this gender socialization would be to decide for myself how I want to show up in my role, and what are my goals and priorities, and how do I allocate my time, and then filter who's a good employee, who fits well through compatibility with that.

It's just so fascinating to see that the way women are socialized, it's like, okay, well, whoever I happen to work with, for instance, now they're in charge of how I show up as CEO. It's not even them. My thoughts about what they might think, which are just my thoughts about myself that I project onto them, are now in charge of all of this. That's more important than how I actually want to do things.

So that was the self-coaching I did. I looked at where I was failing to be self-responsible, I was failing to take responsibility for what actually works for my actual mind-body in this life that I have, and what is actually best for my business and my team. And so I recommitted to that self-responsibility being the most important thing to me.

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Now, if I were newer in my self-coaching, I'd probably have to come up with some intentional thoughts at this stage to practice and work my way up the thought ladder, like it's possible that what I want matters as part of my decision-making process. Or as I coached a student of mine recently, I may not believe I'm in the driver's seat, but I'm at least in the passenger seat. I'm not in the trunk. But this is such a good example of how over-responsibility can creep into the decisions, but how we use our time and structure our lives and why it's so important to spot and change these thought patterns.

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It's also where you can hang out, get coached, and nerd out about all things thought work and feminist mindset with other podcast listeners just like you and me. It's my favorite place on Earth and it will change your life, I guarantee it. Come join us at www.unfuckyourbrain.com/society. I can't wait to see you there.