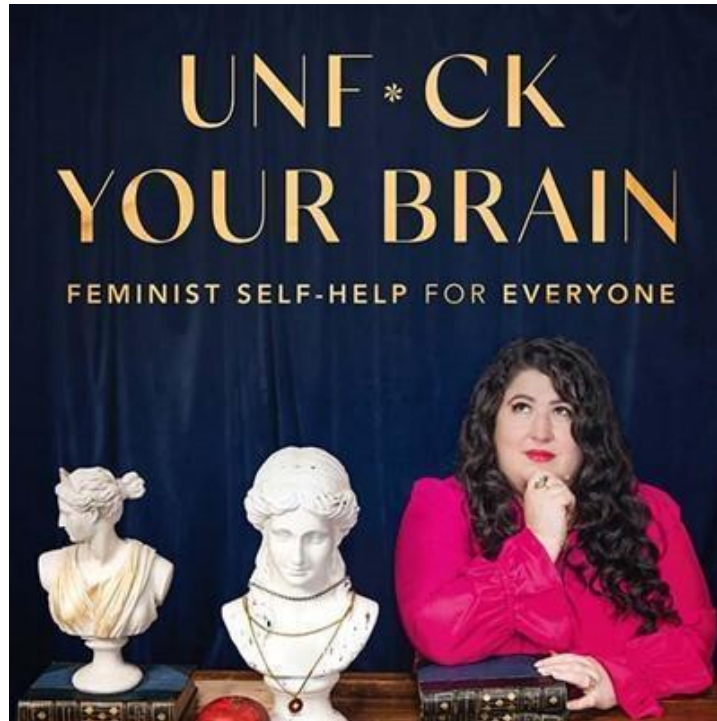


UFYB 382: How to Be Capable in Times of Crisis



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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

UFYB 382: How to Be Capable in Times of Crisis

If you've been feeling overwhelmed by the news and politics right now, you're not alone. I've been hearing from so many followers and listeners about this, and I've been hearing from my own brain about it too. So today I want to talk about one of the sneakiest, most pernicious beliefs that I see showing up in some of the messages I'm getting and also again in my own brain. It's something that is super easy to miss. It sort of blends into the background, but it impacts everything else you think and do when it comes to dealing with crisis. So whether it's geopolitical crisis in the world or a personal crisis in your life, this episode is crucial.

This episode is on the short side. I'm still recovering from a head cold and I don't wanna hack up a lung on the podcast, but I also wanna give you fair warning that I get pretty blunt in this episode. It's short, but it is to the point and powerful. Tough love is coming up. You have been warned.

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.

So last week I posted a Q&A box on Instagram asking folks what they needed help with when it came to mindset, thoughts, and feelings around our current political and global situation. And I got some answers I expected like how to handle stress, how to handle anxiety, how to handle panic, how to handle anger, how to hold on to optimism or hope or positivity. So I'm gonna address all of those in a new series, which we'll be sharing on the podcast and on social media. And we're gonna kick that off in a few weeks as soon as I can create everything for you.

But I also got a lot of messages that said things like, what should I do? Who can I trust? What media do you think I should follow? What organizations do you think I should donate to? I don't know what to do or

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where to start. What do you think? And when I responded to some of these with general guidance, like find a cause you care about and join an organization that's working on it or donate to something you care about, right? Or make phone calls to your representatives. I got follow-ups that were asking me things like, well, but like how much should I donate or what organizations do you recommend I donate to? How do I find out who's doing work? What are the organizations you vetted?

And these seem innocuous, right? They seem like well-intentioned, innocent questions. And I think they are well-intentioned. There's like no bad intentions here from anyone. But here's what's interesting about this to me.

I'm a life coach. At this point in my life, I'm not a grassroots activist. I've never been a news reporter or producer at all. And I don't think there's anything wrong with consulting someone who has expertise, of course. But I think it's striking how much we've been socialized as women to think that we need someone else to tell us what to do and how to respond to life and how that leads us to take someone who we look up to or has been helpful to us in one area and like want them to deliver all the answers to us for our whole lives.

And I think that's because of how we're socialized. All we hear constantly is that women are not fit to lead, that we are irrational, that we are emotional, right? That we are not leaders. And some of us have been able to overcome that enough to believe and follow other women, but not ourselves.

I mean, we're living right now through having a Secretary of Defense who thinks women should not be in combat and trans people should not be in the military at all. Obviously the military is not the only place that people display leadership. My point is just that these beliefs about women that we aren't made for times of crisis, that we aren't leaders, that we are especially

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not like political leaders, that we need other people to explain things to us or take care of us or that we can't figure out what to do in difficult times. That is all programmed into us and it's not fringe. Those are big cultural and social beliefs.

I mean, this is a human problem overall. Obviously, anxiety and stress make us all think less clearly and run around frantic or shut down, but we have this additional layer of socialization that has us looking outside of ourselves for answers, for the right thing to do, and looking for emotional safety by figuring out the right thing and having someone else tell us the right thing.

This is really detrimental to us in times of crisis and in just regular life because it makes us think that we need someone else to tell us what to think or what we can do or how to take care of ourselves. This is a learned helplessness in which we outsource using our own creativity, intellect, discernment, or critical thinking to figure things out. And that is catastrophic for our agency, autonomy, and self-efficacy, which is, self-efficacy is loosely defined as feeling like your actions matter and have impact in your own life and in the world.

What we need in times of crisis, personal or political, is to feel empowered to figure shit out. We need to believe we can take care of ourselves and our loved ones. We need to believe that we can figure out how to be of service. We need to believe that we can trust ourselves to make decisions and be resourceful and figure it out when shit goes wrong.

I cannot stress enough how damaging it is in a time of crisis, it's even dangerous sometimes to tell yourself that you just need someone else to tell you what's going on or tell you what to do or tell you who to believe or tell you who you can trust or tell you who you can follow or tell you who you should obey because that will have you wallowing in indecision, in paralysis, waiting around to feel sure about what's happening or what you

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should do. And in times of crisis, personal or political, there is no certainty coming until it's much too fucking late.

When you are certain of what has happened, it's now over. All of the decision points up until that point, you would not have been sure about what was going to happen and you would have needed to make decisions anyway, right? And believing that you need someone else to tell you what to do, what to think, who to follow, who to believe, how to engage, it's not great for your life in regular times. It has you outsourcing all of your power to circumstances or other people.

And when it comes to living in a geopolitical reality where you or your family or friends may be at risk for your health, your economic security, or even your life, you absolutely have to trust yourself to figure things out, make decisions, even take some risks in trying to navigate these times. It's not just about trusting yourself to get it absolutely right. It's about trusting yourself to figure things out, try things out, adapt and pivot and keep going. And this is the most, what's the right phrase, hot take part of this episode.

But when I posted something about this on social media, somebody commented and said like, you know, I agree, but like you have to remember some people might be having a trauma response and that's why they can't figure things out for themselves and that's why they're asking. And I care deeply that you are having a trauma response on a personal level if that's what's happening, of course. Circumstances don't care about that in the sense that even if there are psychological reasons that this is your thought pattern or that this is what's happening in your nervous system.

If you want to be able to take care of yourself, you're gonna have to believe that you are someone who can take action, figure things out, and rely on yourself even when you're triggered, even when it's really hard, even when something traumatic is happening.

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But when you are in it, when you are having to make important decisions about how you're going to navigate a time of crisis, I just want you to imagine what happens if on the one hand you believe because of my past experiences or because of my trauma or because of being triggered, I react with freeze, I can't figure things out, I need someone else to tell me what to do, I'm not able to work through this.

Or what is it going to be like if your belief is this is really hard and it might even be harder for me than other people because of the things I've experienced or the way my brain works and I don't have another option, I still have to try to figure out what to do. I still have to trust myself, believe that even if I'm experiencing symptoms of something, I can still try to take care of myself.

I have coached so many women through this outside of times of political crisis. The story you tell about your background, about your history, about your trauma, about your PTSD symptoms, the story you tell about those things and what they mean for your life and your abilities and your self-trust are incredibly important. So I know it's easier said than done to just trust yourself. So I'm going to give you a few specific pointers on how you can develop some self-efficacy, some self-responsibility, some self-empowerment after the short break.

All right, my friends. So that was my soapbox. Now I want to give you some actual specific little examples of how to do this. So I got a lot of people asking me what news sources are credible that I should follow. You are able to figure this out for yourself. I really believe in you. I know you can. You are able to Google, pick a news story, pick a topic, Google it, read four different pieces on it. Go look for a conservative take and a liberal take. See what they say. See what makes sense to you. Like apply logic in your brain to what you're reading. See what some of them leave out and some of them have in. Read some international news and international perspective on what's going on at home.

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If we're talking about a personal crisis, get perspective from different people in your life on what's happening, on what's going on with you. People who you know won't just agree with whatever you're saying. Trust that you can use your brain and critical thinking to assimilate different types of information and decide what to believe. Don't tell yourself that you can't know. You don't know who to trust. You don't know who's telling the truth. You don't know what to believe. You have to decide.

When it comes to picking a cause to support, do the research. Really, you will feel better. Like, that's the thing. It's like, we think we'll feel better if someone just tells us what to do, but that doesn't make us feel better. What will make you feel empowered and build your ability to make decisions in your own life and to take care of yourself is to take some small actions now. Pick a cause that you care about. Maybe it's environmental, maybe it's abortion rights, maybe it is governmental integrity, whatever it is.

Again, we have the internet. Research and pick an organization that looks like it matches your values and seems to do work you care about, and sign yourself up to make a recurring donation. Look for a volunteer opportunity in your area and just go show up and put your body to work to help someone less fortunate than yourself. Flesh out what might happen in your own life based on what's going on and come up with different ideas for what you might do to deal with that. The way that we build the trust that we can handle something going wrong in a catastrophic radical way is to handle small things in the meantime and practicing the thoughts that support this.

A place that I see a lot of people kind of spiraling is that they are trying to come up with like different plans based on what might happen, but because their brain of course can't know what will happen for sure, it never feels settled. This is what my brain wants to do.

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So the thought that I've been practicing is I'm taking steps to prepare to protect myself and my family. I'm coming from a history of Jews who were killed in many conflicts throughout the last two millennia from a family that lost people in the Holocaust. My brain always goes to the worst possible place of what might happen in political regimes.

But what my brain wants to tell me is, oh my God, you don't know what's going to happen. What if you don't make the right decision? What if you don't figure it out in time? Maybe you need to do this, maybe you need to do that, maybe you need to do that, and that is not helpful, right?

What's helpful is deciding on concrete actions I'm going to take, making some plans for what seems feasible, and then practicing my belief that I'm taking steps to prepare for what might happen now, and I believe that I can figure it out. If it comes down to it, I believe I will figure out what to do to the best of my ability.

I still can't control circumstances, right? You can make all the best decisions you can make and circumstances may still not turn out the way you want. But you will feel empowered and like you were with yourself through that experience, if you commit to believing that you can understand what's happening, you can decide what to do, you can trust yourself to make decisions.

This is the same through line I tell you from like coaching people about whether to end a relationship to coaching people about whether they need to leave the country. It is believing in yourself to evaluate what's happening around you, use your brain, think it through and decide what to do. Not to make the right decision and know it's right. That can't be your standard, right?

It is about deciding what are your values, what are your priorities, what is your best guess about what's going on, and then what kind of actions are

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you gonna take? But most importantly, how are you gonna think about yourself through that process? Are you gonna think of yourself as someone who is overwhelmed, doesn't know what's happening, doesn't know what to do, doesn't know the right thing to do and who's constantly scanning to find someone to tell them what to do?

Or are you going to think of yourself as someone who is resourceful, who is resilient, who can decide what to do, who does know how to find and process and synthesize information? Are you going to see yourself as someone who can lead yourself and potentially your family through this experience?

You get to decide whether to believe that. In a personal crisis, in a geopolitical crisis, in both. What is your story about who you are in a crisis? That is going to determine so much about your experience and your outcomes. Doesn't determine all of it, again, like we don't control circumstances, but it does determine how you navigate them.

So I really recommend that you stop looking and scrolling for someone to tell you what to do, tell you how bad it is or isn't, tell you what to think about it, and you just decide for yourself what you're going to think. I'm not saying don't educate yourself. Like trust and believe that you can take an information, synthesize it, make a decision. Trust and believe that you can figure out something to do to contribute to the world that you wanna create. Trust yourself to believe that you can prepare for the unknown, but also that you can rely on yourself when the unknown happens to figure out what to do.

The more you believe that you are effective in that way, the more effective you will be. The more empowered you're going to feel no matter what's happening around you, and then the calmer you're going to be able to feel as well.

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If you need support in changing these thoughts, then I want you to consider coming to join us for How to Coach Yourself. It's a full-day workshop that I am teaching on Sunday, March 2nd, and it's literally how to coach yourself because right now that is what everybody needs more than ever is to know how to coach themselves. How do you change your thoughts? How do you change those thoughts of like overwhelm and stress and panic and despair, not into thoughts of like rainbows and unicorns, but into thoughts of dogged, gritty resilience and hope, right?

I'm going to be teaching how to coach yourself. You can use it on anything in your life, but I know a lot of y'all need to be using it on this. If you want to get the link to join or find out more, text your email to +13479971784. And the code word is coach yourself, two words, or you can go to unfuckyourbrain.com/coachyourself, all one word, and we'll send you all of the information.

So text your email to +13479971784. Code word is coach yourself, two words, or visit unfuckyourbrain.com/coachyourself all one word and we'll send you all the details come spend the day with me learn how to coach yourself learn how to actually change the thoughts in your brain.

Because right now we all need to have control of our minds more than ever when everything outside of us seems to be spiraling out of control.

If you're loving what you're learning on the podcast, you have got to come check out The Feminist Self-Help Society. It's our newly revamped community and classroom where you get individual help to better apply these concepts to your life along with a library of next level blow your mind coaching tools and concepts that I just can't fit in a podcast episode. It's also where you can hang out, get coached and nerd out about all things thought work and feminist mindset with other podcast listeners just like you and me.

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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.