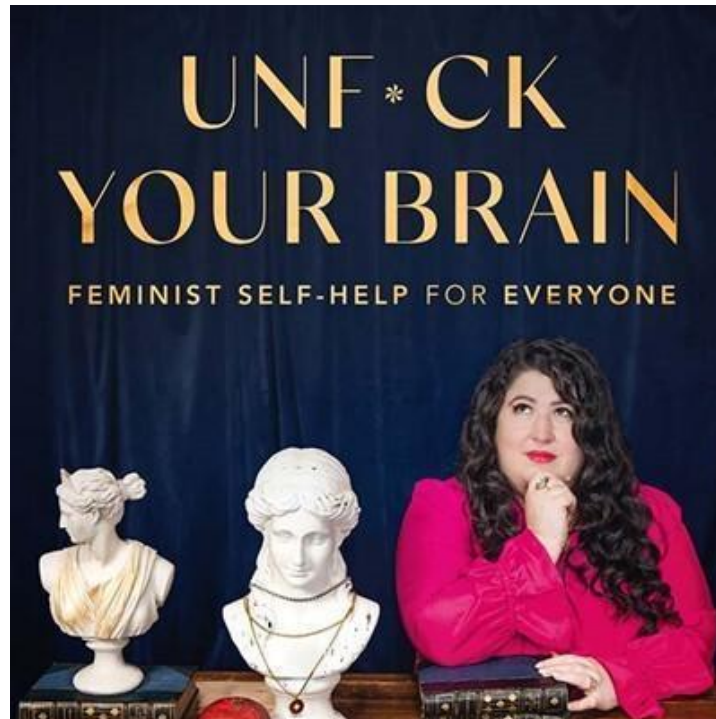


UFYB 390: Pretend You Have Amnesia - Instant Brain Reboot



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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Writing this episode felt like I was doing an infomercial or clickbait. This one quick hack can reset your brain instantly. But it's true. Because in this episode, I'm teaching a coaching tool that I use with my private clients when I really want to help them get out of their preconceived perspective and their existing unhelpful thoughts. This is a reframe that you can do anywhere, anytime to snap your brain out of its habitual beliefs and see anything, a relationship, a goal, a circumstance, a belief about yourself in a new way.

And when we have a fresh blank slate of a mind, freshly cleaned brain, then we get to really decide on purpose what to believe and who we want to be. So we're going to talk about all of that in this life-changing episode. 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.

Welcome back to the podcast, my friends. It is spring here, finally. The trees are all starting to bud as I record this. So it seems like a good time to think about renewal and kind of blooming, evolving, coming back to life, starting fresh. And today I want to talk about one of the powerful reframes that I use with clients when they're really stuck in their way of thinking.

First, we need to establish that there's no shame in having a repetitive way of thinking that you can't shake and that seems really true to you. Your brain craves certainty and predictability above all else, and it will cling to what it already believes, even when it's not true or not helpful, or it's both untrue and unhelpful all at once. So it's always really important to

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remember that your brain kind of has like a thumb on the scale, so to speak, or it has biased glasses.

It's always wanting to keep believing whatever it already believes, no matter how painful that is, because that seems safe and predictable. When we have a long-standing thought pattern, we now have years or even decades of not only believing that thought, but scanning for and accumulating evidence for the thought. We have years or even decades of ignoring evidence that contradicts the thought or other plausible explanations for things that happen that we interpret as proving our thought true.

So for instance, if you have a story about yourself that no one likes you, your brain has spent years sifting through your experiences to identify and highlight the ones where it seems like maybe someone doesn't like you. And it's literally also been ignoring or downplaying or dismissing or excusing away occasions where it seems like someone does like you.

Or if you have a story that your parents aren't proud of you and that they're more proud of your sibling, then your brain has spent years or decades highlighting and remembering instances where your parents were proud of your sibling or your parents seemed disappointed or unimpressed by you. And your brain has been all of that time ignoring or suppressing or dismissing instances where your parents were disappointed or unimpressed by your sibling and or were proud of you.

Or let's say you have a story that your business is not successful. Your brain will discount all the money you've made, all the change you've created in the world, all the customers who are satisfied, or the people you've helped, or the people you've been able to help employ, and it will come up with reasons to dismiss all of that and explain to you why that

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doesn't count or doesn't matter, and to focus on what you haven't accomplished or what hasn't gone well instead.

And what makes this sort of doom cycle in the brain worse is that your brain then reads into everything else to confirm this belief. So your brain will take comments that people made that were really just neutral and read rejection into them if your story is someone doesn't like you. You could be talking about a movie you like and the other person says they don't like that movie, and your brain will say, "See, they think you're a loser with bad taste."

Or your parents will mention that your sibling got a raise, and your brain will say, "See, they're proud of them and not me." Or you'll tell your parents you got a raise and they'll say, "That's great, honey." And your brain will say, "They don't really mean it. They aren't really excited. They are just going through the motions. They'd be more impressed if I was my sibling." That's how strong these stories can be. You can literally get the circumstance you want and your brain will just ignore it.

So your brain just creates this feedback loop where the belief gets stronger and stronger. And then even though you may want to change it, it can feel impossible. And even when you come to get coached or you start coaching yourself after listening to this podcast, it can feel like such an uphill battle, right? It seems impossible that there even is another way to think about your situation because your current way of thinking is so ingrained.

And even when you're able to come up with a new thought, your brain just has so much evidence, it thinks, evidence is in quotes, from the past that it wants to be constantly presenting to you to contradict the new belief you're trying to practice, even when you're just shooting for neutral. And when you're trying to build a new belief, it's normal for that belief to feel shaky,

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even fragile. It's like a tiny little newborn cow wobbling around on its little legs, not totally stable.

And your previous thought pattern is like a 2000 pound bull just mowing down everything in its path. So it's hard for your new belief to get its legs and get stronger when your brain is constantly throwing all of its stored up evidence at your new thought. There's a beautiful brain trick that I teach my clients to use in order to mimic starting fresh from a clean brain slate. And so that's what I'm going to share with you right after this quick break.

Okay, so here's the reframe or the thought exercise I teach my clients to help them when they're really having trouble seeing things in a different way. It's called Pretend You Have Amnesia. It's pretty straightforward. It's simple, but it's very powerful. Here's what you do. You pretend you have amnesia. You pretend that you woke up in the hospital and you don't remember anything about this particular, you know, area that you're working on at least.

You pretend that none of your previous experiences have happened to you. You pretend that you've never developed an opinion or an interpretation of something before. You pretend your brain is a blank slate. If you woke up in the hospital with amnesia and you told your parents something like, "Hey, I was able to move my hand today because I've been in a coma." And they said, "That's wonderful, honey." You would take it at face value. You would think that they were happy and proud for you because you wouldn't have this whole story operating in your brain that discounts or dismisses or explains it away.

If you woke up in the hospital with amnesia and you didn't have your story that people don't like you, and you chatted with someone and you liked them and you asked if they wanted to hang out and they said no, you would not immediately fall into a hole of despair about how no one ever likes you.

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You would just think, "Oh, okay, just wasn't a fit with that person." And on to the next.

If you woke up in the hospital with amnesia and someone told you that you had a business that helped people, that made money, your first thought would not be why that didn't count and actually you're a failure and, you know, it's not enough money and you haven't helped enough people and so and so who you went to school with is doing better than you, you'd probably be surprised and proud of yourself and think it was very cool to find out that you had done that.

So this technique is really powerful when it comes to disclaiming our accomplishments or always looking for what we've done wrong or should be doing more of, because it erases the baseline that we're always comparing ourselves against negatively. Even at my level of success and my level of self-coaching, it's easy for me to look at where I think I should be doing more or comparing myself to other people.

But if I woke up with amnesia and someone said, "You're a life coach on the internet who runs a multiple 7 figure business and employs 8 other women and has helped millions of people around the world," my first thought would not be what a loser or I should have done more or so and so is making 8 figures though. I would probably be like, holy shit, that's awesome. Right? I woke up with amnesia. I could be anyone. That's pretty cool that that's who I am.

This exercise is also very helpful for shifting our stories about relationships. A lot of the time when we're stuck in our mindset in a relationship, it's because we want to move forward and build a better feeling about the relationship. But every little thing is so influenced by our past story. So let's say we're trying to reconnect with a partner and there's been, you know, tension or alienation or you've grown apart, whatever it is. There's such a

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long history of interactions that color the way we think about everything they say or do.

So we interpret what they say is negative often whether it's meant that way or not. And we interpret positive things as being too little or too late or insincere or just sort of not enough, outweighed by this or that other thing from the past. We're unable to let go of the wounds or slights from the past. If you woke up and someone said, "I'm your spouse and I love you," or "I'm your partner and I love you." I'm not saying you'd feel immense love immediately, but you'd be open to the idea, probably.

You wouldn't immediately have judgments about whether it was true or not. You wouldn't be immediately kind of swallowed by all the thoughts you've had about them in the past. You'd observe and consider what they said and maybe be open to it. And this gets to an important point about the exercise. I don't call this have like Blissnesia, right? I'm not saying that if you had amnesia, you'd react to the world with entirely positive thinking and 100% positive feelings.

That's not how amnesia works. The point of the thought experiment is not that you would be like blissfully positive all the time. It's that you'd be starting from neutral. You'd be starting from a blank slate. You'd still use reason and observation. If someone said they were your best friend, but then you saw them trying to unplug your heart monitor while no one was looking, you'd know something was most likely objectively off, right? It's not just about having positive thoughts about everything.

But it's about training your brain to imagine being fresh to a circumstance or relationship in your life that you want to think and feel differently about. When I was studying meditation and yoga back in my 20s before I found coaching, a phrase I heard often was beginner's mind. This amnesia exercise is a way of inducing or imagining beginner's mind. To look at

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something without all of your pre-existing biases and beliefs and be able to examine it with fresh eyes and a fresh perspective.

So if you're having a downturn in your business, for instance, your perspective about it is completely fixated on how it's a downturn, right? On it relative to what was happening in the past, comparing it to the past, comparing it to other people, beating yourself up in a very unhelpful way. If you woke up with amnesia and you were just told that your business was making X amount of money and you wanted to increase that, you would just focus on how to increase it going forward, not on constantly beating yourself up for why it was the way that it was.

Right? So this is a method of training your brain to see things in a more neutral way, which is what allows us to come up with more useful, helpful, productive thoughts about it. Pretending you have amnesia frees you from the mental burden of the past and allows you to focus on who you want to become, not who you have already been. It allows you to focus on what you want to create and not on what you've done or not done before.

It allows you to focus on how you want to feel in your life now and in the future, not on how you have felt in the past. It allows you to focus on what can be co-created in relationship now, not what was done wrong before. This cleans out the house mentally speaking, and then you can start creating the person you want to be now and in the future, because you can be whoever you decide to be. You just have to practice the thoughts that create her. And pretending you have amnesia, funnily enough, is a really good way to start doing that.

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

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these concepts to your life, along with a library of next level blow your mind, coaching tools and concepts that I just can't fit in a podcast episode.

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