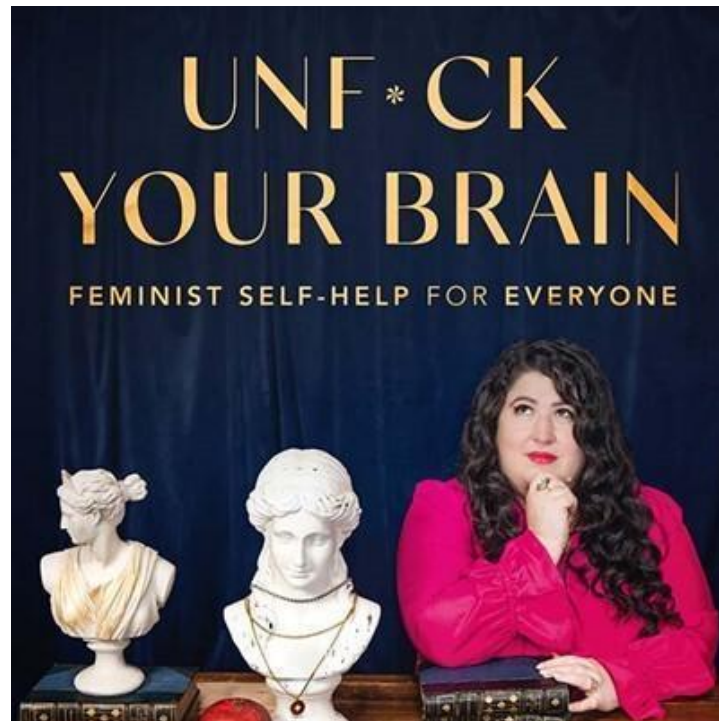


UFYB 415: Coaching Hotline: Confusion About Purpose & Accepting v Giving Up



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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

UFYB 415: Coaching Hotline: Confusion About Purpose & Accepting v Giving Up

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 to this week's Coaching Hotline episode where I answer real questions from real listeners and coach you from afar. If you want to submit your question for consideration, go to unfuckyourbrain.com/coachinghotline, all one word. Or text your email to 1-347-997-1784. And when you get prompted for the code word, it's CoachingHotline, all one word. Let's get into this week's questions.

So, here is the first question. "My son is on the Autism spectrum, and I think I'm such a good mom. But every now and then, I encounter sadness and lose hope. Accepting what is gives me strength, but at other times, not accepting what is gives me power. How do I navigate the world, a school that doesn't operate from my manual, for my son to raise him so that he can thrive and create a bright future?"

So, I think that what's really interesting about this question, the reason I want to answer it is this question of when should I accept what is and when should I not accept what is. And I don't think that's the right frame for the question. When we talk about accepting what is, we don't mean, I don't mean at least, I accept that this is and I'm not going to do anything to change it. That's not what acceptance is. Acceptance is not emotional resistance.

So acceptance is not saying, well, my son is on the Autism spectrum, and so that means just only certain things are possible and I'm not going to try to advocate for him and I'm not going to try to get him the best education I can, and accepting it would just mean being like, well, that's the case and

UFYB 415: Coaching Hotline: Confusion About Purpose & Accepting v Giving Up

so things will just have to be the certain way. Right? It's almost like in that case, you're not accepting what is, you're accepting your imagining about what the future will hold.

Resisting what is would be emotionally resisting that your son is on the Autism spectrum. It would be thinking that he shouldn't be, that there's something wrong with him being that way, that it would be better if he weren't that way, that you don't want him to be that way. That would be what we mean when we say emotionally resisting what is, thinking current reality should be different.

So, I don't think it's a question of when should I accept reality and when should I not. I think the question is, I always need to accept what is in the sense of not emotionally resisting it, whether that's I don't think the school is doing the right thing that I want done for my son. Emotionally resisting that would be indulging in negative emotion about how the school should be different, the principal should be different, the teacher should be different, they're wrong, you're right, you're the victim or your son's the victim and they're bad and it's going to harm him and everything is terrible. That would be emotional childhood, indulging in negative emotion. That's that kind of sadness losing hope.

When you talk about accepting what is, it just means saying, okay, here's the reality. The people in the school have this thought. They're in this model and I'm in my model. Now, I'm his mother and I like my model better than their model. I want to try to get them to change their thought about whatever it is, what resources he should have access to or what his education should be like or whatever. So I'm going to use the power of my mind as much as I can to see if I can change this.

So, I don't think that you should keep this frame of accepting what is gives me strength, but not accepting what is gives me power. I don't think that's

UFYB 415: Coaching Hotline: Confusion About Purpose & Accepting v Giving Up

right. I think emotionally accepting what is, in the sense of not resisting reality, always gives you strength and always gives you power. And then believing that things could also be different and imagining what you believe would be better based on your values, that gives you power and strength also.

But I don't think framing it as I'm not accepting what is when I want to change it, I think that's a false dichotomy. We can accept what is in the sense that we accept it is the case without emotionally resisting it and believing it should be different. And then we can also want to change it. There's a big difference between I would like to change this and I believe it shouldn't be the way it is. It's an emotional difference. You will feel the difference in your body.

I actually think that for you, listening to the What About Sexism episode where I talk about emotional versus political resistance would actually be really helpful if you just sub in school for politics here. It's the same difference. What does it mean to emotionally accept that things are the way they are? People have thoughts that I don't agree with about my son and about what should be done for him and what his education should be like or whatever. I can emotionally accept that, not emotionally resist it. And also say, I want to live in a world or in a school system or whatever where my son has access to these opportunities and so I'm going to try to change what is.

It's like you can change what is from a positive vision of the future, not from resisting and not accepting what is right now. So that is what I want you to think about is letting go of this thought that the question is when to accept reality and when not to. What if we always accept reality? That always gives us strength. And we can always try to change the world towards what we think is a better world and doing that is what gives us power.

UFYB 415: Coaching Hotline: Confusion About Purpose & Accepting v Giving Up

All right, y'all, I know you're as tired as I am of having the top podcasts in wellness or health and fitness categories be a bunch of dudes who don't know anything about socialization and who are not taking women's lived experiences into account. So if you are looking for ways to support the show and more importantly, make sure the show gets to more people, please leave us a review on Apple Podcast or Spotify. And bonus points if you include a few lines about the way you use thought work and self-coaching or anything you've learned from the podcast in your daily life.

Those reviews are what teach the algorithms to show us to more new people. It helps us get new listeners all over the world. And I'll be reading one story from a recent review in each of these question and answer episodes.

Today's review comes from Jocelyn. I love this example of how thought work really helped her in her daily life. She says, "I teach in a nursing program here in a province in Western Canada. Because of COVID, my small city class of 14 grew to almost 80 as we moved to a blended delivery teaching model. Kara's teachings from the podcast helped change my thoughts from, holy shit, how the hell am I going to do this? To, oh my God, what a great opportunity to practice my teaching skills and grow and learn about online learning. And oh my God, I can reach so many more students. The change in my thought led to the obvious change in feeling and I used it to change my actions. I'm sending this review to thank Kara for all her hard work and to let her know that she is reaching people and causing amazing changes with her work, even up here in Canada."

Okay, second question. "Hi Kara, I spend tons of mental energy on my ongoing jumble of conflict and confusion around my work and life purpose. I want to have lots of money, work I enjoy that looks cool to others, is meaningful and defines me as a person." And she's put "I know!" in parentheses after "looks cool to others." "I'm in my 40s and frustrated and

UFYB 415: Coaching Hotline: Confusion About Purpose & Accepting v Giving Up

discouraged. I'm a freelance writer and I'm doing thought work on not hitting my work so I can know if I want to change it. I've started and quit many creative and entrepreneurial ventures multiple times, writing a book, starting online businesses, inventing a product, etc. I have tons of ideas, get excited about stuff, quit when things get hard and beat myself up for giving up the dream. This feels like possible perfectionist fantasies entangled with thoughts about money, work, purpose, caring what others think and my self worth. I've made progress with thought work in other areas but I'm confused on this still and upset about being confused."

Okay. So number one, being upset about being confused is not helping you. And number two, you're not confused. You just have a lot of thoughts. Y'all, there is no upside ever to telling yourself you're confused. When you tell yourself you're confused, do you know what the result line you get is? It's more confusion. Telling yourself that you're confused is a great way to never ever solve a problem and never ever make a decision.

Okay, so the problem here, I think, is that you think having all these things would make you feel differently. You want to have money and work you enjoy and have other people like you and be meaningful and define you. You want the external circumstances of your life, what job you have or how much money you make or what other people think of you, to create meaning or fulfillment or identity for you. Those are two totally separate things. They're not connected.

Because you've put the weight of who you are, feeling happy, feeling fulfilled and knowing who you are, on the shoulders of what kind of job you have, you've made it impossible to ever change your job or launch any of these creative projects because you think that they're supposed to make you happy. And you've gotten yourself all confused as if it's super complicated but it's really not. Anytime that anybody starts and quits things over and over, it's because you think the thing is supposed to either be

UFYB 415: Coaching Hotline: Confusion About Purpose & Accepting v Giving Up

easy or make you feel good. And it's not going to do either one of those things.

If you start a business because you think, well, if I have a business, I'll feel good about myself and I'll have meaning and purpose, of course you're going to quit the minute you have a negative emotion, which is going to be practically immediately because creating a business is really fucking hard. It involves a lot of negative emotion. You have to bring the meaning and purpose to the business or the project, but you want the project or the business or the venture or whatever, you want those to give you something.

You want the money and the work and the whatever to be meaningful. It's not meaningful. Nothing's inherently meaningful in that way. Your thoughts are what give it meaning. You have to bring the meaning. You want the money and the work, the projects to define you as a person. That's not their job. A business idea that you come up with 2 minutes ago and launch can't define you as a person. What does it know? It's a baby. It was just born. You have to define yourself.

So the reason that you can't get any traction on any of this is that you want to change circumstances so that the circumstances will define you and give you identity and give you meaning and purpose. None of that shit comes from the outside. That is all an inside job. So you have to decide what is your purpose? What gives your life meaning? And then, okay, you can change your job or start a business or write a book or invent a product, whatever, doesn't matter. But so long as you're telling yourself that you need to do those things in order to have a meaningful life and in order to know who you are as a person, you're never going to be able to do them.

And of course, that's not true. People have had meaningful lives before the internet was around. So starting an online business can't be what gives life

UFYB 415: Coaching Hotline: Confusion About Purpose & Accepting v Giving Up

meaning. You have to decide what gives your life meaning. What are you here to do? Who are you? You have a lot of deep work to do on your relationship with yourself. You have to do that before you can create these things.

Guys, trying to write a novel or start a business or any big goal, the point is just to bring you into confrontation with yourself, not confrontation like it's angry, but to confront yourself. It just brings up all of your shit so you can get to know yourself better and grow and learn. It's not because the business or the money or the publication of the book or anything or the relationship is going to bring meaning to your life or cause your emotions or validate your existence or define you. It's not. None of it is going to do any of that.

You having an online business in the future is just you in a different circumstance. Now your circumstance is I don't have an online business. In the imagined future, your circumstance is you have an online business, but you think, oh, if I were in that circumstance, then I would have a different identity. I'd know who I am. It would give my life meaning. No. The circumstance line doesn't do any of that.

And as you wrote here, you quit things then you beat yourself up, and then you're confused and then you're mad at yourself for being confused. That's just symptomatic of your relationship with yourself, and you're trying to run around and change your circumstances to change your relationship with yourself. So, my advice to you is you dig into your relationship with yourself.

Forget about the creative project or the inventing the product or starting the online business or whatever it is. You need to be digging into the way that you are thinking about yourself, the way you're talking to yourself, the being upset that you're confused, the beating yourself up, the story you tell

UFYB 415: Coaching Hotline: Confusion About Purpose & Accepting v Giving Up

yourself about yourself, that your life isn't meaningful now or that you don't know who you are as a person or that you need other people to think you're cool. All of that is the work you need to do.

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.

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.