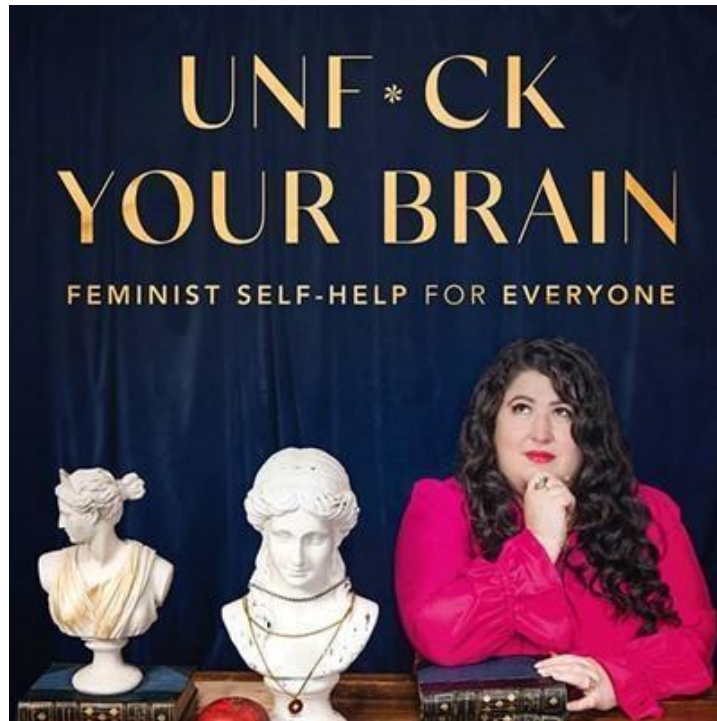


UFYB 421: Coaching Hotline: Are Some Circumstances Harder for Thought Work Than Others?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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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.

Here is question number one. "Hi Kara, thanks for being an amazingly awesome force in my life." You are very welcome. "I am for all intents and purposes of this question, a cis, straight, monogamish married lady. I have a number of close guy friends. In the past, I've had some issues with awkwardness around being attracted to each other and or being perceived as flirting. I know I can't prevent awkwardness forever, but I really want to set myself up to make these current platonic friendships last. I also think that I need to ask myself some questions about how I have been socialized as a woman. What behaviors am I putting out that are reflections of how society tells me to act around men? Do you have any ideas for me?"

So, this is a great question. I actually want to start with as usual, not exactly what you asked because you wrote, "I want to set myself up to make these current platonic friendships last." So, remember that you don't get to control whether those friendships last. I feel like the undertone of this question, although I could be wrong, is that in the past, people have thought you were flirting and that's been a problem that impacted the relationship in some way.

UFYB 421: Coaching Hotline: Are Some Circumstances Harder for Thought Work Than Others?

If somebody else doesn't want to be friends with you because they don't actually want a platonic friendship, they secretly want a sexual relationship, or they are looking for evidence that you're attracted to them, so they take something to be flirting, they have that thought about it, and then they think that they're going to have sex with you when they aren't or whatever is going on, right? That's not something you can control.

So, I want you to adjust your goal. The goal can't be I want to make these last. You don't get to control that. You can't control the other person. You can't control what they think, what they're really looking for, how long they want to be friends with you, what kind of relationship they want to have with you. You can't control any of that. Your goal needs to be how do I want to show up in this relationship? And what's giving me that pause is that it's like you think there's a way you're supposed to act with guy friends as opposed to anybody else. Or you think that you need to show up in a certain way, or you need to not be awkward, or you need to not seem like you're flirting or whatever else. And that's not the right goal. You can't control that.

Right? There are men who will think that you're flirting with them if you say hello or make eye contact. You can't control that with how you show up. So, I really think a better question for you is how do I want to show up in these friendships? What do I want to think and feel about my friendships with men with whom I don't want to be sexual? Because the truth is what makes something awkward is just your thoughts. There are plenty of people who have platonic relationships where there's sexual interest on both sides and they just never act on it. And sometimes it's acknowledged explicitly, and sometimes it's not acknowledged and it's just not a problem, right? They don't make that mean anything. And there are people who have platonic friendships where there's no sexual interest and anywhere in between. Right? Somebody's sexual interest is just their thoughts about the other person.

UFYB 421: Coaching Hotline: Are Some Circumstances Harder for Thought Work Than Others?

So, I want you to kind of back up from, there's a way to do this, or there's a way to make these last, or there's a way to control what other people think. And just focus on how do you want to be? For instance, you could be a straight cis monogamish married woman who likes to flirt with your friends. If that's within the agreements you have with your main romantic relationship and you could be straight up about that. And that would also be okay.

Even if you were straight up, I want to flirt with these people, that's not what makes something awkward. Right? If you're clear about what's available for it, that's not what makes someone else think they might get something else, right? This question doesn't have a lot of details, so I'm not exactly clear on what's going on in the past, but I just want you to think about it that way, step back and think, even if you wanted to flirt with platonic friends, you could. That wouldn't control what they think.

So, it really just has to be like, how do you want to show up? Not how do I control them and make sure they don't think it's flirtatious and, right? How do I make sure it lasts and all of this? You can't control any of that. So, you can totally dig into how you're showing up around them. But I actually think, actually everything I just coached you on is a reflection of how women are socialized, which is to think that the way they act determines what men think about the context and nature of the relationship. And if a man ever has an idea about the context and nature of the relationship that's different than the woman's idea, then it's the woman's fault because however she acted is what gave him that idea.

So, I actually think these questions turned out to be the same question. I just didn't know that when I started. That's where your socializing is coming up. I don't think it's about flirtation or not. I think your socialization is coming up in you trying to control the outcome of a relationship and what these men think about you and keeping these categories based on you doing it the right way and showing up, acting the right way to control their brains.

UFYB 421: Coaching Hotline: Are Some Circumstances Harder for Thought Work Than Others?

That's what I think. And I'm the one who you asked what I think, so that's what I think.

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.

This week's review comes from KS Radio. It says, "Kara's approach is transformative. Kara is smart, insightful, and reads minds." That's right, y'all. I'm secretly a witch. "Well, not really, but she seems to be able to articulate the thoughts and concerns that float in my mind, and she names the issues and helps to provide a most practical framework for reflection. Her podcasts are on repeat for me. Her book is terrific. She is an incredible find. I recommend her to everyone." Thank you, KS Radio, not just for reviewing, but for spreading the word about my work. That's so appreciated.

Okay, second question. "Do some circumstances require more thought work? I'm trying to really understand how to think about a given circumstance. Take workplaces as an example. Before I knew about thought work, I'd have definitely considered some circumstances to be better. For example, certain work environments felt better because I had more friends there. I'm starting to believe that I could feel good in any work environment, but that the amount of thought work it would require for me to

UFYB 421: Coaching Hotline: Are Some Circumstances Harder for Thought Work Than Others?

do so would vary a lot. And in some sense that makes me believe that the circumstance isn't truly neutral because I could, for example, choose to work in a place where thoughts that made me feel good came to me easily. Does it make sense to think of some things as requiring more thought work and if not, why not?"

Okay, so this is such an important distinction. I'm so glad you asked this question. Some things require more thought work for certain people and other things require more thought work for other people. So, when I say some things require more thought work, what all y'all's brains want to hear is, "see, some circumstances are harder than others." But no, some things require more thought work for your brain. And some things require less thought work for your brain. Right? That's another way of saying it.

The first way I said it was some things require more thought work for your brain and then some different things require more thought work for other people's brains. But another way to say it would be some things in the world require more thought work for your brain and then there's some things in the world that require more thought work for other people that require less thought work for you. The difference isn't that some things are neutral or not or more or less neutral or anything like that. It's that not every brain has the same thoughts about every circumstance.

So, for you, a certain workplace might require more thought work to love because of your brain and all of its factory settings and preconditioning and past experiences and thought patterns. Whereas for someone else, that workplace could be easy for them to love. So, it takes you more thought work to love that workplace than it would take someone else to love that workplace maybe, but it's not because of the workplace. It's because of the brain that's doing the thought work.

And then you could take that same person who has an easy time loving a workplace that you have a lot of trouble loving, and then we could move

UFYB 421: Coaching Hotline: Are Some Circumstances Harder for Thought Work Than Others?

both of you to some other context in your life, like your body image or your relationships or something else and you might easily love a partner that they would have a lot of trouble loving. And they would have to do way more thought work on.

So, some things absolutely require more thought work than others, but it has nothing to do with the thing. The thing is always neutral. It's that the brain that has to do the thought work is not neutral. It's not starting from zero. We don't have a situation where we have a bunch of neutral circumstances, and then a bunch of brains, all of which are starting from a blank slate and with exactly the same capacity and wiring and experiences and it's all the same. No. All the circumstances are neutral, and then we've got a whole bunch of different brains that have a whole bunch of different thought patterns already. And those are the brains that are trying to do the thought work.

And so, when something kind of triggers a thought pattern that's very ingrained for you, it's going to require more thought work for you. But that's not because of the thing itself. And it's not because there's something wrong with you and you just need more thought work than other people. It's like musical chairs. There's going to be something. There's going to be stuff that for you is less thought work required than other people need to do on it. And then for other people there'll be more. It's totally normal and I see that across myself, my coaching colleagues, all my clients. Right? There are areas of my life, like I for sure had to do thought work in building my business and making money, but relatively it was not so bad.

The thought work I've had to do about dating and relationships, that is my Everest to climb. That was the work that was the hardest, and I still do. And of course, new stuff comes up in business. I'm not saying it wasn't hard work. It was still hard work. It's just it was like hard work and then even harder work. Whereas I have colleagues who for sure have had to coach themselves about their romantic relationships and their partnerships, but

UFYB 421: Coaching Hotline: Are Some Circumstances Harder for Thought Work Than Others?

it's like hard work. But then they're coaching they have to do about their business or making money is like harder work for them, right? It just depends on who you are and what areas, you know, what patterns you have in your brain.

So, I do think it's helpful to think that some things require more thought work because if you don't recognize that, then what happens is you're like, "Well, it only took me whatever, six weeks to work on my thoughts about that fight I had with my friend. So, why is it taking me three months to work on the thoughts about this fight with my boss or my mother instead? Like something's gone wrong." No. Things do require different amount of thought works from your brain. You can even flip it and just think of as my brain requires more thought work on certain C's than others. But it has nothing to do with the C. It's not inherent to the C. Good question. I am sure you're not the only one to think about that.