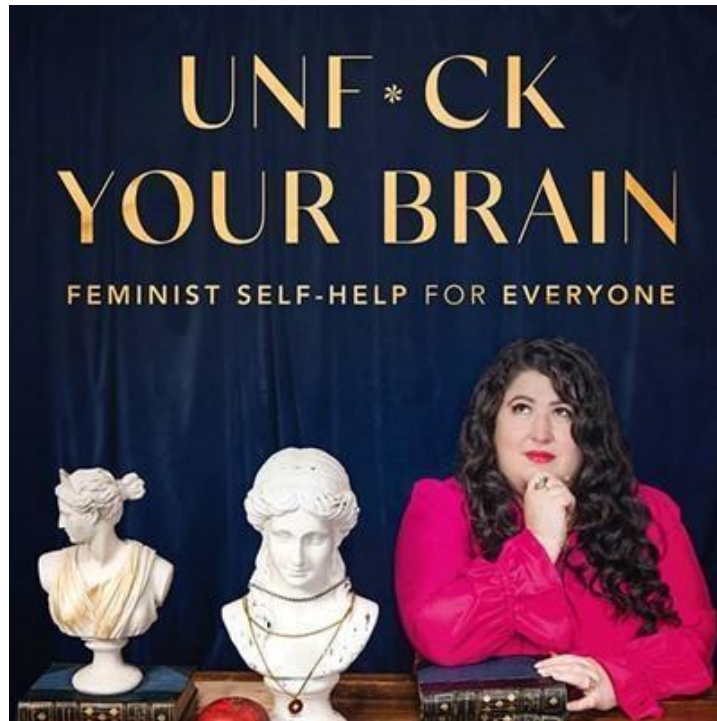


UFYB 428: How to Stop Emotional Outsourcing with Bea Albina



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

[UnF*ck Your Brain with 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.

Kara: Hello, my friends. We are here today with one of my other good friends, in addition to all of you, Bea Albina. Oh my God, I just forgot how to say your last name. Albina.

Bea: It's only been like 15 years we've known each other, so that makes sense.

Kara: Listen, just leave this leave this all in, Pavel. It's fine.

Bea: Hi, Pavel. Love you, mean it.

Kara: Pavel is our podcast editor. So, Bea was on the podcast previously in 2021, and we talked about how codependency affects our nervous system and can impair our brain's ability to function the way we want. Such a good episode and really her area of expertise. So, we're going to link that in the show notes. If you didn't hear that episode originally, go back, listen to it. But today, we are talking about the next evolution of her work because you have a new book coming out. Or actually, it's out. You have a new book that came out two days ago.

Bea: It came out. Yeah. Very exciting.

Kara: Called *End Emotional Outsourcing: How to Overcome Your Codependent, Perfectionist, People-Pleasing Habits*. So, can you give us your spiel? Like tell us how you came to I know, I mean, I've did so many of

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these interviews. Like how you came to write this book. Tell us a little bit about your book.

Bea: Okay, fine. This is so fun. Also just a quick side note, because I've been doing all of these with strangers, and I love you so much. And it's just so nice to be talking to you about it. It also feels fun and silly, which is really nice because I've been having to be a grownup and...

Kara: And that's not your fave.

Bea: Listen, listen.

Kara: Bea giving an interview where she's not doing any funny voices seems impossible to imagine.

Bea: I think it is. When my wife and I gave our speech at your wedding, I think we used four different accents in like three minutes, right?

Kara: And they all came from you. Yeah, Billie was not really involved in any of that.

Bea: Facts. No, poor sweet thing. I mean, she does what she can to keep up. But Leos, you know.

Kara Loewenthal: All right, tell us about your book before the people listening to this are like, what is happening?

Bea: Okay, I wrote a book. So from the time I was little, I believed that love and safety came from what I could give, how useful, accommodating or pleasing I could be, not from who I was. And that belief shaped everything, including why I went into medicine. So, becoming a nurse practitioner felt like this perfect extension of that survival code where I could care for

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others. I could prove my value every single day through doing, and in that process maybe secure belonging.

What I started to see in my practice was really striking. Patients would come in with digestive issues, fatigue, chronic pain, anxiety, depression, things that didn't get better with just prescriptions or protocols. And I realized after time that the missing piece wasn't just diet or labs or pharmaceuticals or supplements or any of that. It was this elephant in the room, which was the stress, distress, and trauma in their nervous systems, because their bodies were carrying survival codes too.

And so once I began to weave somatic work and nervous system science into my practice, I started to really see things shift in a way that people were having relief that actually lasted, right? They weren't just managing symptoms. They were living in this new way. And so I came up with the term emotional outsourcing to talk about that root of what I kept seeing going on. And I define it as when we chronically and habitually source our sense of the three most vital human needs, safety, belonging, and worth, from everyone and everything outside of ourselves instead of from within. And these are the habits that are generally referred to as codependency, perfectionism, and people-pleasing.

Kara: So, I'm curious like, you probably saw more women coming into your practice with these concerns. And so I know we talk a lot on the podcast about how society teaches women to be perfectionistic, to outsource their own authority, their own value. So, I'd love to hear just a little bit more about like why do you think women are so much more inclined to engage in emotional outsourcing and how that impacts their lives?

Bea: We're trained from so little to put our authenticity and the truth of who we are so squarely behind us for everyone else's supposed benefit that I think we lose track of ourselves really quickly and really easily while trying to be the right size, the right weight, the right tone, volume. I mean, pick an

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aspect of personality and authenticity and just human experience, and we're told we're doing it wrong from really, really, really small.

And so we lose track of connection in our own bodies to the experience of being our bodies. And so when you're not the locus of anything, right? When your sense of self in the world isn't actually in your body, what are you going to do but look to everyone else for the answers, right? Am I pretty enough? Am I smart enough? Am I good enough? Am I quiet enough? Am I loud enough? Do you hate me? Wait, Kara, actually, do you hate me? I'm so sorry.

Kara: I do. I do secretly hate you. That's why we're doing this, yeah.

Bea: That's great. Good. Thanks.

Kara: I wanted to give you an opportunity to use your tools, you know?

Bea: Oh, I really appreciate that. Thank you. You're just so kind. But, yeah, I mean, we are so detached from our biological impulses, right? When to pee, when to poop, when to eat, when to like, cuz oh, oh my god, the number of times growing up I heard, do you really need to eat that? And I'm like, I'm six and it's an Oreo and I just had swim practice for an hour and a half. Yes. But what would I do? I'd put the Oreo down. Right? There's this shame that's so imposed on women's bodies that hiding from your own body makes freaking sense, right? Why do you want to be in that thing that nobody likes?

Kara: Yeah, I mean, I think we talk a lot on the podcast about how women get alienated from their own body and their own selves by society. And then they don't even I mean, because it's all the same, right? You can't you check out from your body because it's the site of so much like surveillance and criticism and it's never conforming the way that it's supposed to. And

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then you can't tell how you feel or what you really think about anything because all of those experiences are also somatic, but you don't have any access to them.

Bea: Right. Right. And so that's part of the drive to write the book was because the old narrative, largely about codependency, first of all, came out of the 12 Steps and I'm not dissing the 12 Steps. I'm not tangling in those waters. I'm simply saying that it was made akin to substance use. And taking care of people became enabling. Having needs became being needy. And who was this aimed at? The wives of alcoholics. I'm air quotes for all. And so the whole really framework of codependency as we know it now came to be through the War on Drugs. Like it really came to prominence in the '80s. Right. So when we look at it through that sort of crime and punishment mentality, it's a framework for looking at how we take care of ourselves and each other that is not loving, kind, or compassionate, and is profoundly devoid of any kind of sociopolitical lens.

Right? So the book really takes a look at how the impact of systems of oppression of the patriarchy, white settler colonialism, and late stage capitalism on our very concept of self. Like who am I in the world? Who is this body? How do I relate to you, Kara, and to my wife and to my parents? How do I relate to the world is of course impacted in every way by those systems, and those systems benefit when we as humans socialized as women act in these emotionally outsourcing ways because we're really easy to control.

Kara: Can you talk more about I think that's so the idea the codependency and the War on Drugs. That was like a brief connection. And then can you talk a little bit more about the root of the theory of codependency in AA and that like, can you just expand on that? Because I feel like a lot of women do identify as codependent. It's like that's a term they've heard that helps them try to understand their kind of, you know, inability to tolerate other people's

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distress or, you know, discomfort. So I think that would be really useful for people to understand the background of it.

Bea: Yeah. So Lois, who was Bill W.'s wife, came up with this whole thing of Al-Anon, which was the program for the wives really of the alcoholic men.

Kara: And Bill W. being the founder of AA for people who don't know.

Bea: Of AA, right, exactly. And so, it was the companion program that used the same big book and the same disease model. And that's what I take profound umbrage with. It's really problematic to call a survival skill that I think is brilliant. Like us like being codependent, having that habit is so smart. Like think about a six-year-old being like, listen, these people don't love me for me. So what am I going to do? I'm going to take my core self, I'm going to hide her in the back of a cave and I'm going to show up and do the tap dance that they want me to do so they'll love me and they'll feed me and they'll praise me. Genius kiddo.

But because it came out of AA and then, you know, a lot of the big books that were written, Codependent No More, Melody Beattie, they came out of this crime and punishment model where the real framework is that you are sick, you are suffering, you are diseased. There are defects in your character that you have to look at, and you have to be rigorously honest about the defects in your character if you are ever to get free. But because it's a disease model, you cannot get free. Right? It's inherent. It's an identity. And if you refuse to identify, oh, wow, there's something really wrong with you, huh? Wow, wow, wow.

And so it locks you into that model where you're then dependent and codependent on it for your potential survival, right? And to be sort of absolved of the sin of having gotten through life the best way you knew

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how. And so through my work, I work to really disarticulate those things and to show us that when we can find compassion for the parts of us that were like, really just trying to get love and really just trying to feel safe and really just trying to have belonging and really just trying to like make your parents less sad or less angry at each other or whatever.

Kara: And survive. I mean, as a little kid, you are dependent on your parents for literal physical survival.

Bea: Yeah, they're really bad drivers. I just don't think that yelling at ourselves about it and telling the story that we're somehow busted and broken is any way to move forward. Right? And so when we can look at it through the lens of it being a survival skill and a very reasonable, understandable, natural, expectable outcome of growing up how we did in the cultures and the societies and the religions and the settings that we did, then we can say, you know, frankly, of course you did, right? Like, of course you turned out that way. That makes sense. Let's learn a new way. Let's take responsibility for how we're showing up. Like let's look at our A line in a new way to create new outcomes. Instead of just your whole A line's beating yourself up. What are you what are you doing?

Kara: Right. And A line being like your actions.

Bea: Oh yeah. I figured they heard that.

Kara: I talk about the model on this, but not, I mean, actually less and less as time goes on.

Bea: Yeah.

Kara: The other thing I love about the term emotional outsourcing is like, I think one of the things that I often see come up in coaching is women let's

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say whose family was not dysfunctional or was like fairly happy and healthy and they're like, okay, but then so like why am I codependent? Why am I people-pleasing? Right? And I'm always talking about the idea that like, yeah, well some people get a double dose because they get it from their family and society. But even I mean if you're socialized as a woman or another marginalized group in this society, then even if your family wasn't like this, the culture is telling you that.

And so emotional outsourcing seems like a much better, you know, term for that doesn't have that connotation or I don't maybe it's just a story society's told about codependency, but it always sort of is like, it is that like, oh, well something happened to you when you were little that turned you into this kind of person as opposed to like, well actually all of society tells you to do this all the time, no matter how happy your family was.

Bea: Right, and it's the reason why I don't talk about again air quotes, the alcoholic in this book at all. Because again, I think we're the focus of your life from emotional outsourcing is everyone else and what they're up to. And so by framing it as I am this way in response to you, we're just reifying and strengthening the same thing. So let's just divorce that and bring your focus back home, often for the first time.

I'll also add without needing to tell like some huge trauma story, there can be really subtle ways that we're not attuned to in functional even loving families that lead us to develop these brilliant habits. And I think it's okay to like identify with these things without having like the big boom bam trauma. You know what I mean? And there's a real framework within like the 12-step world that's like qualifying and earning your seat. And I think it really sets us up to what I you and I both critique this on Instagram of like, everyone has really big trauma. Right? Like I think we need to take a breath, back up from like that cliff.

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Kara: We don't take breaths on Instagram. We just hold our breath and say a lot of things all at once.

Bea: No, that's really true.

Kara: No calming down. No calming down.

Bea: I sha'n't calm down.

Kara: Hot takes immediately and push publish.

Bea: That's right. In 80 seconds or less. All day long. But, but in IRL, we need to take deep breaths and like, the trauma matters, and identifying with the trauma is not the thing that's going to change your life.

Kara: So let's talk a little bit about how this translates like into the body, right? So I think like you obviously somatics are a big part of what you do. And I feel like a lot of people have had the experience of being like, okay, I'm going to set the boundary. You know, like next time this happens, I'm going to say the thing, whatever. And then of course, like, actually what happens is total freeze, total shutdown, total freak out, whatever. Talk a little bit about how the concept and what you teach in the book in terms of ending emotional outsourcing can help people actually like build the capacity to do those things as opposed to the just like, I declare I'm going to be different next time and then nothing happens.

Bea: And nothing happens. So the nothing happens because of procedural memory. So our brains learn how to do a thing and then run on heuristics, run on shortcuts. Like, have you ever, well, we don't drive because we're New Yorkers, but like...

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Kara: No, I use that example all the time. You drive someplace without thinking about it or you drive to your old house when you're not thinking about it.

Bea: Exactly. Yeah, it's exactly that. That or like riding a bike is procedural memory. And so in our brains, someone you say something and someone's face like crinkles up, like maybe they're grumpy, and the procedural memory jumps to freezing or jumps to defending yourself or jumps to some old skill from childhood that your body and your mind still think are going to save the day. And so we need to actually change the way that information loops between mind and body to actually change the behavior.

Kara: So that's what you teach in the book, I presume. And by the book to find out more.

Bea: Yes. That's the one thing you'll learn over like 300 pages. You're welcome.

Kara: That would be a big thing to learn. I think that would be worth 300 pages if that's what a book could teach you.

Bea: Why, thank you. I really appreciate that. Yeah, it is a big thing to learn, right? That it really is written into the body in these complex ways that deserves so much of our attention, that are not, and this is the part that's really challenging. It's not necessarily about doing things. It's about being with yourself.

Kara: Can you give people like a little idea of how to do that? Because I think that's one of those things that people are like, yeah, that sounds great, but I've literally never done that in my whole life. So,

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Bea: That's cool. I got to go. I'm busy. Or what I love to say, oh, I'm sorry. I cut my foot earlier. My shoe's filling up with blood, which is of course a Romy and Michele's High School Reunion reference. No, I lost you on that one. Cool.

What do we do? We start with so I think baby steps are way too big. And I think it is too ambitious and sets us up for failure to take a baby step. So I think we need to take newborn kitten steps. Like the tiniest, teeny tiniest, wee little steps. And we need to start coming back into the body through activities that are very unlikely to trigger or activate the nervous system because we need to work below the level of conscious awareness. Meaning, if you're going to set a boundary for a first time, don't start with your boomer mom. Like what are you doing? Don't do that. That's a bad idea.

So the way to begin to come back to the body is step one. And if this is all you learn, is orienting. So orienting the nervous system is we all do it by default all the time, but when we get into a stress or an activation, we forget to. So it's literally just looking around the room you're in and taking in your environment and letting that settle into your body as a signal that there are no lions here.

So for folks, when you try to tune into your body and you start to get anxious, I recommend out loud, if you can, there are no lions here, there are no lions here, there are no lions here, as you look around the environment. If that feels too big and too stressful, to orient to the whole space, just look at your palm and just look at the beautiful little lines, all the ways it moves. So when we get activated in the nervous system, we can go into a kind of tunnel vision, but when we go into overwhelm, we can like looking at the broad expanse of the world can be in and of itself too activating for the nervous system. So choose your own adventure here. Go big or go small, but focus.

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And then once you feel your nervous system start to calm a bit, that's when we can start to build the next layer of interoceptive awareness. So awareness of what's happening within your own body as a way to then build the capacity to communicate and to hear what your body's saying. Which we say hear it, but it doesn't mean it's like literally like you're going to hear Scooby-Doo. Like it's you're not going to necessarily...

Kara: Oh, I hope not. I think if you hear Scooby-Doo, something else is going on.

Bea: I slipped you a tab. That's what happened. I put acid in your drink and you're welcome. Um, no.

Kara: That's a crime just for the record. Yes. That's a felony.

Bea: Damn it. That is a felony. Um, but sometimes the body talks through more subtle ways. Right? So it's generally through sensation. So a change in temperature, in like a felt density, like your stomach might feel heavy or you might feel a knot in your throat. You might feel tingling in your chest. When I get happy, I often feel what feels like champagne bubbles in my chest. It's very pleasant. I really like it. And like I have a little bit of it now because it's so nice to see your face and to talk about this because I think you were one of the first people I called when I got my book deal. Yeah, probably. This is yeah, probably. So this is like a really beautiful full circle. But anyway, so taking these small moments to start to ask the body what it wants.

And I start there for women in the patriarchy because it's the main question that's been taken away from us. What do you want? What is your actual desire? What is your actual preference? Do you want the Oreo instead of do you need to eat that? Right? Like what fills your actual cup? But not in

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relationship to your marriage or your kids or your job or your anything but you as a mammal, what do you want and need?

And so an easy place to start is your morning beverage. I think most of us, I know you reach for your iced coffee, I'm Argentine, I reach for mate. But we don't think because it's it's habitual. So pausing, orienting, feeling your feet on the ground, taking a breath to come into presence in your body. And you can do this with kids and family running around because it takes about four seconds. Body, what do you want and feeling in for the answer. And I know it feels like so banal and like B.S. and like who cares, but that's where we want to start very much on purpose. Like as a person with very high level somatic training, we start at the like the dumbest thing.

Kara: Yeah, and I think being okay like, you may not get an answer the first time. The signals may be confusing. That's okay. And this there's like this whole we always want to think our way to what we want or whatever, but then you're up in the I was just coaching someone in my mastermind the other day about how she like had told herself she wanted to have more adventures and have more downtime. So she like had a lovely adventure and then her brain was like, that was the wrong adventure and you did it for like 10% too long, right? It's like that is always whenever we're trying to operate from that brain level of like, I'm going to cognitively decide on the adventure or what that I want to do, we're going to be lacking that experience.

Bea: Yeah. And in those moments, we can come back to the body. Like we can tell brain thank what I say is no thank you and I come into the felt sensation of the body. One of the things I teach in the book and chapter seven, it's all a blur at this point. Six or seven, is how to map your nervous system, so you can start to understand what your signals of moving towards sympathetic activation, that fight or flight, or moving towards that dorsal overwhelm, check out are, so that you have like a really easy road map to your own self that can help you to check in before an interview,

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before asking for a I don't know, a raise at work, right? Like going on a date, you can check in with your body and start to know what state you're in and where you're headed so you know how you can intervene on your own behalf.

Kara: Yeah, I love that because so much of what it's like everybody's body reacts to things differently and you experience those things differently. So that's such a great practice.

Bea: Yeah. And I do recommend doing it yearly, especially after 40. Everything changes up in there. Every five seconds. So that's cool. That's fine.

Kara: Is there anything else that you think people should really know about what you teach in the book or what they'll learn that we haven't kind of hit on?

Bea: I think we did a pretty darn good job, I must say, right? Like redefining the term, understanding that compassion is really the route forward and that the old framework is such a meanie pants way of talking to ourselves and thinking about ourselves. I think the importance of community in all of this is truly vital. And that's one thing the 12 Steps do beautifully. Right? Like as a global thing, folks in those programs have each other's back hard. And I think that's gorgeous. I mean, if we're to learn from them, I think that's what we should take.

And I know your programs are community-based, my programs are community-based. What we have to understand about emotional outsourcing is that we were hurt in relationship. And so we need to be in relationship to heal. And doing one-on-one work is vital. It's important to get us to the next level and really we then need to come back to community to see that we're not the only one. This is way more common than most of us

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think. That there are really brilliant people living expansive, beautiful lives who also have these kinds of thoughts and experiences in the world and that when we get together, we can have each other's back so we can all grow.

Kara: Yeah. I sometimes think there's like a weird it's like a false dichotomy born on Instagram or something of like, it's like self-healing is in community, not individually or vice versa. I'm like, it's the same thing. Like if you are in your house alone working on your self-coaching, what are you thinking about? Interactions you had with other people. Like you're going to, it's all the same thing. So you're going to like you can't nobody lives in isolation anyway and all of the work that we're doing is to enable us to show up differently in the interactive world we all live in. Right. So like, yeah, you're not a brain in the jar. Like you have to do this work in community.

And even if you did a bunch of work on your own somehow, the minute you show up in community, you're going to get triggered again and have to work on it. So like... But I think it's so important because there is that perfectionistic impulse of like, I'm just going to like solve this all on my own and then I'm going to relaunch myself perfect and ready to go and like that's not a thing.

Bea: Yeah, and then no one will have any problems with me and no one will criticize me and everyone will know that I'm finally worthy of love and care. And I think the folks like myself being so verbal about community being the focus comes from how siloed and individualistic healing culture has become. Like co-opted healing culture has become in this sort of whitewashed Instagram like self-healers kind of framework, which is really about you healing you, but it's us that heals us. And so that's why I differentiate so hard.

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Kara: I mean, you need both because if you're not doing work on your own mind yourself, I mean, plenty of people are in a lot of relationships and are rampaging around like with no skills.

Bea: Right, right, right. Yeah, and I think one-on-one needs to exist because I mean, chapter four is all about the shame we carry. Right? And how intensely shame-coded all of this is. It's like this thick layer of shame on it. And so in order to be able to talk about it in community with others, sometimes we need to have that sort of like one-on-one bubble of someone loving just us and no one else knows about it until we've done enough work to be able to say to a group, here's my shame. You know what I mean? And so it definitely cuts both ways, and both are important.

Kara: Yeah. So, your book is out. Everybody can get the book everywhere they want to get it now.

Bea: Wow. It's wild.

Kara: Wild, right?

Bea: It's such a wild thing.

Kara: Yeah. Someday I'll do a tell-all podcast about the experience.

Bea: Uh-huh. I might join you on that. Let's uh, yeah, that'll be interesting.

Kara: Everybody should go buy the book. Where else can people find you?

Bea: You can find me at beatrizalbina.com. It's Beatrice with a Z. My podcast is called Feminist Wellness. I lead a six-month coaching program using all of these tools called Anchored, and I have a whole suite of other courses in the Somatic Studio. They're all available on my website.

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Kara: Perfect. All right, y'all, go check it out.