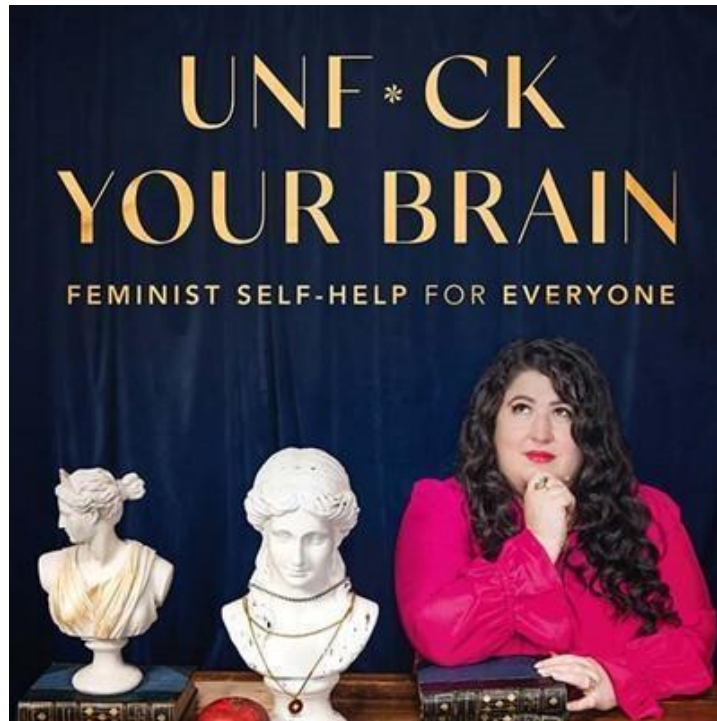


UFYB 433: Coaching Hotline: How to Not Take On Other People's Pain



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's the first question, which I know a lot of you struggle with. So I think it's going to apply to many of you. So here's the first question. "I find myself struggling to maintain a thought work routine. And I should just pause and say, even if you don't have trouble with this, you should listen to this anyway because it gets to something that comes up for all of us in just different ways sometimes. I don't want to sit down and write out my thoughts. Sometimes it's because I think I already know what the issue is, and sometimes I'm just avoiding everything and want to buffer instead. At least I know when I'm buffering and recognize my agency and making that choice, but I really believe doing thought work and writing things down more consistently will help me. Yet I have an I don't want to that keeps popping up like it's too much work. I know the question's not what to do but what to think. I guess I need help with intentional thoughts that will get me to sit down and do things."

So, here's why I want to answer this question because whether we're thinking about thought work or anything else, the biggest problem we have in accomplishing our goals is that we think the feeling of not wanting to means something or matters. I'm gonna say it again. We think that when we don't want to do something, that that matters, that that is something to

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pay attention to, that we should take it seriously and consider whether or not to not do it, right? That that thought that we don't want to do it means something or has some kind of legitimacy or should have some claim on us. That's the biggest mistake that we make is thinking that not wanting to do something is kind of relevant to whether or not we do it.

And when we think like that, we will usually not want to do things that are good for us or that we want to do because brains just don't like to do new things. Brains like to conserve energy, they like to be comfortable. They'd always rather buffer, right? We'd always rather pick the kind of quick dopamine loop that we can get access to. And we're never going to want to dig into unpleasant thoughts or go through negative emotions on purpose or for some of us we're never going to really want to go work out or we're never going to really want to sit down and do our work, but it's irrelevant, right?

And the difference between people who are able to succeed in something and who aren't, it's not that one group just has all of this amazing motivation, always feels great, right? It's like the artists who succeed aren't the ones who feel inspired all the time. They're the ones who have a routine of sitting down to write no matter how they feel. Whether they feel inspired or neutral or unmotivated and want to sit on the couch, they go and do it anyway. It's not about willpower and forcing yourself. When you think about white knuckling or willpower or forcing yourself to do something you don't want to do, it's like you're keeping the not wanting to and then trying to push through it or overcome it. What I'm suggesting is really a different awareness and orientation, like relationship towards that thought or feeling, which is just that it's like a, it's irrelevant. It's like a misfire.

A lot of us have situations in which random weird thoughts come into our head that we would never do. Like, if I'm driving along a cliff, my brain is always like, this car could just turn and go right over the cliff. I have no desire. I have never had suicidal ideation in my life. I am very happy with

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my life. I love living. I have no desire to drive my car off a cliff. When my brain says that, I'm just like, you're so weird. What are you saying? But okay, we're not doing it. Like I don't take it seriously. I'm just like, that's a weird thing my brain does on cliffs. I don't know why. Maybe in a former life I fell off a cliff. I have no idea. That's something my brain does. I make it mean nothing, right? I don't have a lot of drama about it. I don't give into it, clearly. But I don't freak out about it either. I don't think it means anything. I'm just like, that is a weird misfire that my brain does. Okie dokie, right?

Or like sometimes, I don't know about the rest of you, maybe I'm, maybe I'm the weird one, but I don't think so. I think we all have this. My brain will just imagine doing something really weird and random like, if you're in a boring meeting, like taking off all your clothes and running through the room screaming. It's like your brain just will think about random shit and you don't take it so seriously. And so it's not hard to not act on it. I don't have to like white knuckle my way through not driving my car off the cliff or not taking off all my clothes in a meeting and screaming, right? I'm just like, that's a weird thought brain. Okay.

That's how I want you to think about relating to the not wanting to. That the not wanting to just doesn't mean anything. It's really not even relevant. It's not a big deal. It doesn't mean you truly don't want to. It doesn't really have to mean anything. It's just like a system error. Like your brain's always going to be like, nope, don't want to. It's just a reflex. It doesn't mean anything.

That's really how I want you to think about whenever your brain says I don't want to do anything. I think I may have told the story before but I was at a mastermind meeting and my teacher was coaching somebody in the big group, a certified coach who was saying that, you know, the reason he hadn't grown his business was he just really like dreaded when he had meetings with clients or had work to do. And so my teacher was like, well, she just randomly called on me. And she asked him, she was like, how

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often do you think like Kara feels dread about doing her work? And he was like, well never, I like, I assume it's never. That's why she's has a seven figure business and is successful.

And so my teacher was like, Kara, how often do you feel dread about doing your work? And I was like, every fucking day. Because it's just a reflex. Coaching calls are my favorite thing in the world. They're my favorite part of my whole business. In the five minutes before a call without fail, my brain is like, you could just not do the call. We could just cancel it. We never cancel it. It'll be fine. Like let's we could just cancel it and not do it. It has nothing to do with my true commitment and it doesn't mean anything to do with whether I actually enjoy it because I do enjoy it. It's just a reflex of my brain literally being like, we're sitting on the couch now, if we go do this, we have to stand up and exert energy to talk. We should save that. We might need it later. Let's just watch Netflix and get dopamine. But I don't make it mean anything. I don't say to myself, see, I don't want to teach my calls. I'm like, I do want to teach my calls and my brain just randomly says shit like this sometimes and doesn't or all the time and it doesn't mean anything.

So you got to change your relationship to the not wanting to. The truth is you do want to. That's why you have the goal or you're trying to establish the practice. So it's not true to say you don't want to. What's true is to say that you want to and then sometimes your brain also says it doesn't want to. But that saying it doesn't want to doesn't mean anything, right? So reformulate it as, I'm a person who wants to do this. That's my primary identity here is like, I want to do this. And my brain like is stiff sometimes and I have to get it moving for a minute before it remembers that it's okay to do it. Change your relationship to the too much work or I don't want to thoughts.

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

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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 Team Spike. I don't know if this is a person or a team of people, but I love that they wrote a review. This review says, "Kara turns so many accepted paradigms upside down to look at how they actually work. The way we set goals, create confidence, relate to our others and ourselves. She takes concepts apart to reveal ways to examine our thinking and she's taught me how to make mindset shifts that serve me way better all caps. This work is so important. Thank you, Kara." Thank you for submitting that review.

All right, second question. "Dear Kara, I know one of the basic tenets you teach is that we do not cause other people's feelings. I'm having a hard time believing this for a few reasons. First, because my whole life I believed that if I love someone, I will at least try not to hurt them. I also feel terrible when someone I love feels pain. But the worst part is when I take an action and the person I love has painful feelings about it. In addition to the pain of seeing their pain, I often feel guilt. I do not think the action itself was bad or wrong or that I'm a bad person because I know I did not intend to create their pain. But I did create the circumstance that they'd painful feelings about. This has led to me being very hesitant to do anything that my brain thinks someone will have painful feelings about, even if it's an action I want to take. I've listened to the podcast about not being responsible for other people's feelings, but I'm still struggling. Can you help?"

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Okay, so here's what you're missing. When you say, well, I did create the circumstance that they had painful feelings about, you are still believing that when a circumstance happens, there's some kind of like required or natural thought about it. So the way you're thinking about it is like, well, it's normal and natural and required to have a negative thought about this circumstance. And since I'm the one who created the circumstance, I created the negative thought. But the part you're missing is that there's no like natural or normal or required thought to have about any given circumstance. I'm going to say it again. Like there's no like natural or required or even consistently predictable thought to have about any given circumstance.

So you didn't create the pain because you didn't create a circumstance that inevitably someone has a painful thought about. You may have created a circumstance, like you said X words, but then out of a hundred people, we'd get a hundred different reactions to that. Some people would not give a shit at all that you said it. Some people would be horribly outraged, some people would be in the middle. The circumstance that you create would be seen by ten different people or a hundred different people in ten different ways or a hundred different ways. That's what it means to say you didn't create their feelings. Their own brain did. Or you created every possible set of thoughts and feelings that could possibly be had in relation to the thing, right? It's not one or the other. Like you're responsible for anything anybody could possibly ever think about anything you do. We know that's not true. That's extreme, right? Or you're not responsible for any of it.

So the whole reason that you feel guilty is that you still think you're causing their pain, right? And you think that the circumstance, it's like your true problem is that you still think that the circumstance causes pain. I know you think you know that they have a thought about it, but you are still thinking that there's a like sequence that has to happen. Like, well, I created this circumstance and then they had the thought. So I created the thought. But really what happened is you create a circumstance and then there's a

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hundred different thoughts that someone could have about it and they just happen to have one of them.

You don't take responsibility for it when you do something and someone's not upset, or they feel neutral, or happy about it even. Right? You may try to take responsibility when they feel happy about it, but think about all the things you do that no one cares about. People have totally neutral thoughts about. You don't walk around thinking, oh I'm responsible for their neutral feeling about this. You're not responsible. You create whatever the C might be and then they have a thought about it.

The whole problem here is your feeling of guilt and that's what you have to work on. And really what's going on is you feel terrible when someone you love feels pain and you think probably what tends to happen is you think that that's a good thing about yourself and it makes you empathic. But your pain is not about their pain. Your pain is caused by your own thoughts. So you're confused in both directions. You think other people's pain causes your pain and then you think what you do causes their pain. Neither one of those is true. And you can see you're getting a terrible result because what you're doing, you're causing yourself pain. That's the only pain we know you're causing. So you're sacrificing yourself and the things you want to do in order to try to control someone else's feelings. You're just hurting yourself so that you won't hurt yourself in a different way when you tell yourself that you're responsible for someone else's feelings. It's all you. It's like a puppet show. They have nothing to do with any of this.

You have to think about all the things that impact why someone comes up with one thought versus another, and you don't control any of that. Keep working on it. This is something that is very challenging for a lot of my students, particularly people socialized as women, particularly people who tell themselves that they are empathic and feel others pain. You only feel your own pain. You are not feeling someone else's pain. And you have to stop taking responsibility for that and also believing that you can feel other

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people's pain. You're just, you have a couple of different thoughts here that all contribute to you thinking that there are no boundaries between your emotions and other people's emotions and that is not producing good results for you. That's it for this week. I'll talk to you next week.