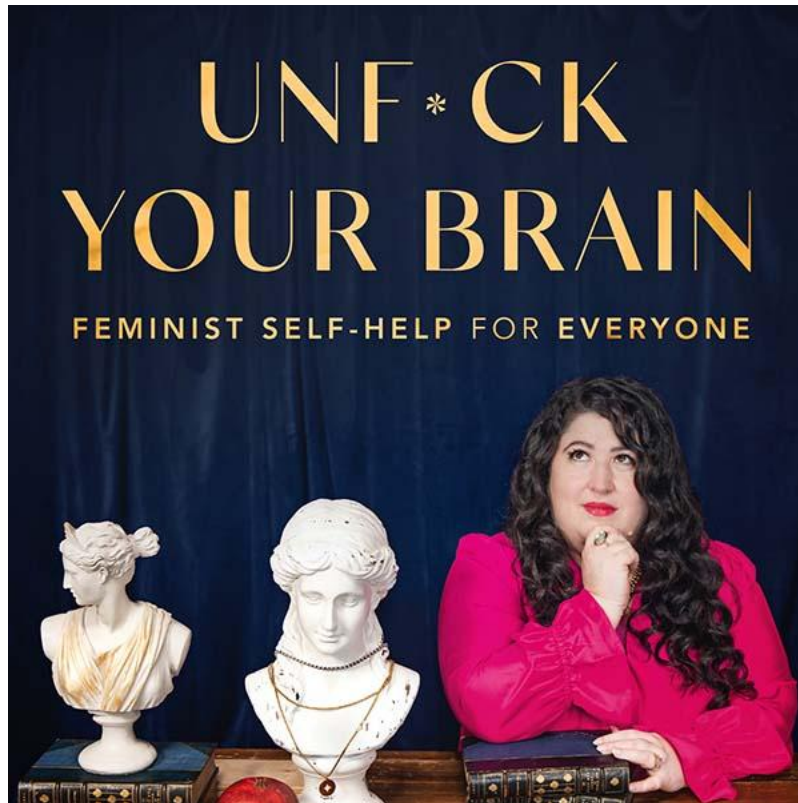


# UFYB 434: What Everyone Gets Wrong About Confidence (Greatest Hits)



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

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Hello, my friends. So normally when we do a Greatest Hits episode, it is something that has come out farther back in the catalog. I've been doing this for almost 10 years now. We have a lot of episodes. So often it's something from way back in the catalog that only those of you who have really been here the whole time would have heard. In this case, this week's episode is actually fairly recent. So I just want to explain why it's so crucial and why it's worth listening to again, even if you listened when it first came out, which was, you know, a few months ago. I have been thinking and talking and teaching more and more about confidence as a set of skills.

And I have a brand new concept for understanding what really creates confidence and what those skills are that I'm going to introduce to you on the podcast. This is the first place anybody's going to hear or learn about it. I have not even shared this inside my coaching programs. It is breaking news in the coaching world. It is kind of a distillation of everything that I have ever taught in an incredibly effective and easy to use form. I'm super excited about it. It really feels like this is my thing. So I'm going to be introducing that on the podcast next week.

And so I want to replay this episode that talks about what confidence is and isn't, because that's going to really lead in productively to the episode next week where I announce and share this new tool and explain it. So listen to this week even if you listened to it a few months ago. Next week I'm going to be introducing you to that brand new tool. And then for the four episodes after that, I'm going to be walking you through each element of the tool and giving you some practices you can use on your own to start using this incredible new concept. All right, Kara of a few months, take it away.

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

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create a life on your own terms, one that you're truly excited to live. Let's go.

All right, my friends. So today we're diving into an advanced understanding of confidence. What it is, why it matters, and what creates it. So, let's do a throwback to how I used to start many of my episodes when I was building the vocabulary we use when we make and listen to this show. How does the dictionary define it? The dictionary defines confidence as, "a feeling of self-assurance arising from one's appreciation of one's own abilities or qualities."

In other words, it's a feeling created by thoughts, positive thoughts about yourself. And that's what I've taught in the past. And I do think that is the entry-level way of explaining confidence. After all, if you have negative thoughts about your appearance or your work performance or your creative abilities or your athletic skills or whatever else, it's going to be hard to feel confident in that area.

And a lot of what passes for empowering advice in the self-development world is like that old saying, putting lipstick on a pig, right? It's telling you just to believe in yourself or just think positive thoughts, but without teaching you how to do that. How to actually get underneath the platitudes and identify the thoughts that are blocking your confidence and change them. So you just try to spackle a positive thought on top of your existing negative thoughts, and of course that doesn't work and then you feel disappointed and you maybe give up on the power that is thought work.

So what I've really focused on is helping women actually identify the thoughts blocking them and changing those bit by bit, and that has helped so many women feel more confident. I hear from women every day in my coaching program, the Feminist Self-Help Society, in podcast reviews, and

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emails and DMs that this work has helped them feel more confident by building them up in the specific areas that were troubling them.

And now having coached women for a decade, I've had the opportunity to see that there is so much more to creating a truly confident woman who lives a truly confident life. We think of confidence as the absence of insecurity. We don't want to feel bad about ourselves, and if we don't, we call that confidence. But that's just such a small piece of the puzzle. Because women aren't only socialized to lack confidence in themselves in the sense of having self-critical thoughts or feelings of shame or anxiety about their abilities or qualities. That would be like the opposite of that dictionary definition.

Women are also taught to think in ways that produce a lack of confidence in all areas of our lives. And a lot of them aren't always as obvious to us because they don't kind of align with that mainstream first level understanding of the word confidence. I think it's really important to bring this confidence lens to a broader perspective on our lives, because when we look at some of these areas and these common thought and feeling patterns that I have identified by working with thousands of women through the lens of confidence, we can see how they're all related.

We don't feel confident in our relationships because we don't feel secure in them, right? So we don't take up space, tell the truth, believe that we are an equal member, believe that our desires, thoughts and feelings, pleasure, whatever it is matters as much as anyone else's. Instead, we feel like we're constantly at the mercy of everyone else's pleasure or displeasure. And we evaluate how loved or valuable we are based on how other people treat us or what we think they think or feel about us.

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We don't feel confident in our work because we ignore our strengths and we're always focused on our weaknesses or we're comparing ourselves to others who are farther along or telling ourselves it's too late to succeed or that we're missing something essential for success. And the tricky part of this is we may actually be very successful in a mainstream public way. Like other people would unequivocally say that we are successful. But we don't feel that way inside, or it doesn't feel like enough. And the secret truth is we aren't going as big and bold as we could. We aren't as powerful or successful as we could be. And we know that deep inside, even when our success looks good to other people on the outside.

We often don't feel confident in our decisions because we don't trust ourselves to make the right decision, and our brains are always cataloging our previous decisions that didn't work out or any previous mistakes we made. So we end up second guessing ourselves, taking forever to make decisions, running them by 12 different group chats, but never really feeling satisfied with the answer.

We don't feel confident in our perception of events or interactions because society has taught us to doubt ourselves and to see ourselves as people who are too sensitive and who overreact, and we can't be sure we're interpreting things correctly. So we gaslight ourselves, we run everything by those 12 group chats again, right? But we still never feel secure in our interpretation.

We don't feel confident with our money because society has taught us that we're bad with money, that being good with money means being restrained, budgeting and saving, that spending money is always reckless or irresponsible, and that making money or investing or creating wealth is hard and kind of mysterious and mostly for men. So we avoid financial decisions or we make them randomly and impulsively, or we just do whatever feels safe because we don't feel confident taking risks.

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And just like I was talking about with the professional level of success, it can look on the outside like you are very confident, but you know inside that you aren't. So, for instance, I have a multiple seven-figure business. I invest my money in the stock market. I invest in angel investing, in venture capital deals. Like I am a sophisticated investor and I do understand my money, and I still notice my brain telling me all the time that I don't know what I'm doing with money. I've done enough work on this to be confident enough to still move forward. I know how to coach myself on it, but that thought still comes up even though from the outside, nobody would say that I seem like I don't know what I'm doing.

Fundamentally, wherever we are on the path, we don't feel fully confident in ourselves. And that's a bigger problem that we have to address at the system level along with addressing confidence at the specific thought and feeling level. So to do that, we have to understand what we're missing in the way we think and talk and teach about confidence right now. And that's what I'm going to explain after this quick break.

So here's what I think we're missing when we talk about confidence. We really focus on confidence as a feeling. So we target the specific thought making us feel anxious or ashamed or insecure, and when we fix that, we think we're done. But the lack of confidence is actually deep-seated in all the ways I explained in the first half of this episode. And it shows up in a lot of ways other than a feeling of insecurity. It shows up in paralysis around decision-making. It shows up in settling in relationships. It shows up in people-pleasing and codependency and other unhealthy dynamics.

It shows up in simply not living up to our potential, not going as big or bold as our soul might be calling us to do or as our talent and capabilities might allow. I do teach that our potential is not something we're ever supposed to fully reach, and I firmly believe that, but there's a difference between actively chasing it and expanding it and growing or being so far away from

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our potential, so scared to look at it that we only vaguely even know where we would find it, right?

So one top-line way to think about this is that when we focus on confidence as a feeling, we solve the first-level problems. We solve our active pain points. But we miss the power of going from good to great. So if you feel insecure about your appearance, you might experience that as active anxiety. And you might then think you've solved the problem when you work on those thoughts enough that this insecurity goes away. But that doesn't mean you've actually experienced the power of feeling actively, confidently amazing about your body.

If you feel insecure about your work, you may experience that as active anxiety or shame when something doesn't go well. And you can totally work on your thoughts to stop worrying so much, stop shaming yourself, and you will feel better. The pain is gone, and that is totally valuable and important. But that's not the same as creating the active confidence of truly believing you are incredible at what you do. The kind of confidence that would allow you to actually take more risks and tolerate more failures because you have that underlying bedrock of confidence beneath it.

When we think of confidence as just the opposite of insecurity, the solving of insecurity, the resolution of that negative emotion, then maybe we're going to get to neutral. Maybe we're going to get to feeling good. But confidence on a deeper level doesn't always feel good. And when we think of confidence as just being feeling good, we are at risk of missing the transformative power of true confidence. Because deep confidence, the kind required to live a confident life, often means taking risks, pushing yourself, expanding your growth, knowing how to get through the discomfort of evolution, none of which feels good.



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There's a really powerful paradox here. True deep confidence actually is partly about tolerating thoughts and feelings of insecurity that may come up as you work towards building a deep trust with yourself that impacts all areas of your life. So what I see now is that true confidence, the kind that changes your life, is not actually a feeling, or at least it's not just a feeling. The positive feeling of confidence in your body, that is something that sometimes happens when you are building deep confidence as a way of life. It's like a byproduct that you sometimes get to experience, which is fun. But it's not always there and it's not the main point. It's not really even the goal.

True confidence is a mindset. It's a way of being. It's a relationship with yourself. And when we think of it as just being a feeling, we're actually kind of chasing the wrong thing. We're chasing the ephemeral emotion rather than the bedrock of belief in ourselves. And then we may even take feeling insecure or nervous about a big risk or something bold we want to do as a sign that something's gone wrong, we're not really confident, when that may not even be true.

So confidence isn't just about being able to create that positive feeling emotion in a specific moment. That's a cool skill. It has been great for me in my life. I've taught it to so many of you. And I think it's important. But there's so much more to truly transformative confidence. That's about a way of being in relation with yourself that changes everything in your life.

I've been working at distilling this mindset, this way of being and living into four specific skills that you can learn and practice to create confidence, not just in a moment, but as a foundation of your life. Not just as a temporary feeling, but as a permanent way of being.