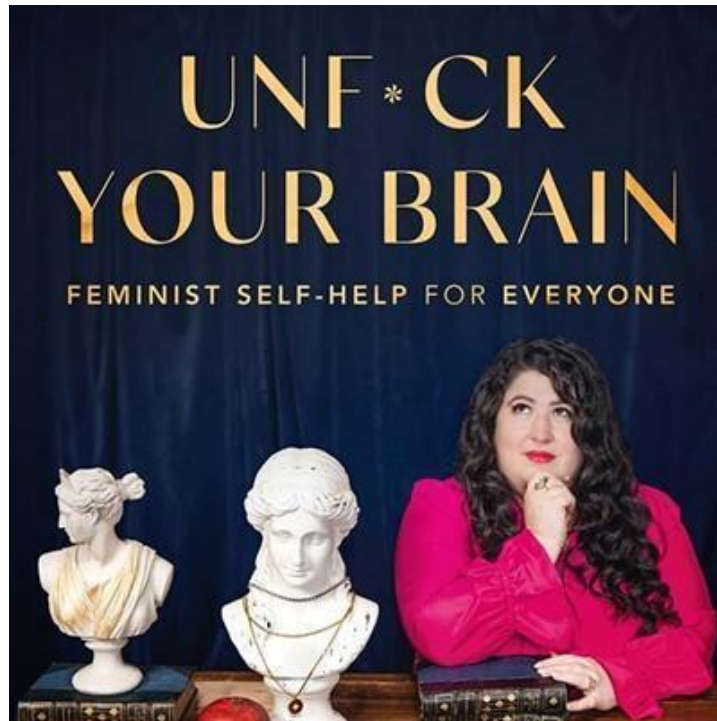


UFYB 447: Coaching Hotline: Frustration with Kids, Two Flavors



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.

So, here's the first question. "I'm struggling with my thoughts and actions around play with my child. My child is a preschooler who, like many preschoolers, loves to direct our play and tell me how to position my hands, where to stand, what to say, what facial expressions to make, et cetera. I feel annoyed that she's trying to control me and tired of being bossed around. But of course, those are just thoughts that I can change if I wanted to.

"However, when I think about changing my thoughts, I'm overwhelmed by conflicting messages about how parents should be with their children, i.e., be authentic versus indulge your child's desire for connection. How do we show up as our authentic selves when sometimes our authentic self feels like, leave me the fuck alone."

I love this question. Okay. So number one, I think this is an amazing opportunity for you to empathize with your toddler, right, your preschooler. So you say, I feel annoyed she's trying to control me and tired of being bossed around. Like imagine how your preschooler feels, right, whose whole life is determined by other people.

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So of course, during play, your child wants to tell you what to do all the time. You feel so annoyed that she's trying to control you and boss you around during this brief period compared to all the rest of her life when you and everybody else is telling her what to do, right? So I just love that kind of little inversion there and I think if you thought about it that way, you would just see that of course, you both feel that way, right? It's something you have in common.

The meat of this question is this idea of being authentic. And I mean, I authentically sometimes when I'm angry want to punch someone, but I don't do it, right? And I'm not like, oh, I need to show up authentically, so I should punch this person. There are ways in which thinking about our authentic self, I think is useful. Like obviously, socialization teaches women to not go after their dreams and to go along with what other people want and to worry too much about other people's approval.

That to me is different than it being authentic to just act on your unmanaged mind. So what I really like about this question is I actually don't think this part really has that much to do with parenting directly. I think it's a bigger question, but it's a good one. To me, being authentic means am I showing up in the world in the way I want, in line with the person I want to be? Am I hiding some part of myself or not showing up as myself out of fear of judgment? Like those are all concerns about authenticity, not acting on my unmanaged mind, especially irritation or frustration or anger. To me, that's not being authentic.

You have to decide. Like maybe your authentic self is someone who tells your toddler to fuck off. Right? Like that's legit. You could decide that. She would learn something for sure. Actually, I don't know if I know it's a she, I just assume. But you get to decide. Like is your authentic self someone who tells a toddler to fuck off? Maybe, maybe not. But even so, do you want to be doing it from frustration or irritation?

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So I think in this situation, you of course, as you identify, your trouble is with these shoulds, right? But I think this framing of it as being authentic versus, you say, indulging your child's desire for connection. I don't really think it's about that. I just think it's about what does it mean to be authentic to you? It might mean being like, mommy needs a break right now. Like mommy's needs are important too, and she's going to go in the other room and like take a five-minute break or whatever.

But what you're talking about here is acting out of irritation. You're annoyed, you're tired of being bossed around. Those to me are not like your authentic self, those are just thoughts that you're not managing that are creating irritation and frustration. So I don't think that is about your authentic self. And so I wouldn't frame it as that way. The question is really more, do you want to be someone who's annoyed with your child when they want to play a certain way or not? And what thoughts would get you there? This thing about your authentic self, I think is kind of a red herring in this context.

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.

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Today's review comes from Reina0909 and the title is The Best Therapy. She says, "I've spent almost a year now coaching myself with Kara's help, and I am so, so much happier. The ways in which I've grown this year are profound and astonishing. On the daily, I feel resilient and empowered. I've recommended this podcast to all my women friends and they all rave. Do yourself a favor and listen to this podcast, truly liberating like nothing else out there.

Kara's ideas are so radical they can sound conservative at times which might be tough for some, but stick with it and think everything through. They make so much sense in the end. I'm actually fascinated by this podcast because I'm so curious what radical ideas sound conservative. Maybe I'm talking about self-responsibility, but I really love that this listener was willing to feel uncomfortable, think it through, stick with it, and take what resonated with her." That's all that I hope happens when someone listens to my podcast.

Next question. "So this is about parenting and in a little bit of a different way. I find it really difficult to manage my emotions around my partner's son. I have found that I have a whole bunch of shoulds that I received from my mother and society about how children should behave. These are outdated, but I just can't seem to stop myself from getting incredibly irritated sometimes. Help!"

Okay, so number one, I don't think that you've done any thought work on these yet. That would be my guess just because you don't kind of tell me about the thoughts, but maybe you have. Either way, I think the first thing you have to do here is just accept that this is happening. You guys can't tell my voice, but the help is in all caps with an exclamation point.

And the question says, I just can't seem to stop myself from getting incredibly irritated sometimes. Yeah, like welcome to being a human

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dealing with a child, or a human dealing with a human of any age. Sometimes humans get irritated by other humans.

So you're aware that you have a bunch of shoulds and that you think they're outdated. So you're aware of that. You see those thoughts and you still have them sometimes. And that's fine. Nothing has gone wrong. It's not really that helpful to try to stop yourself from having a feeling. You're like, I need to stop getting irritated, right? It's like you already have this agenda and you're resisting it. As opposed to being like, oh, it's so interesting that I'm so irritated about this thing that I'm not even sure I really believe. This is outdated. I inherited this. It's so interesting that I want to enforce that now on my partner's son.

It's also interesting to me that you call them your partner's son because it just makes me wonder kind of what else is going on here in your thoughts about your relationship with this child. They're your partner's son. You don't call them my stepson, right, which I'm not saying that's good or bad, but I just, I think there's a whole bunch of juicy thoughts in here. I swear I would never be someone who called things like this juicy, but here we are, for you to work on around kind of what you think your relationship with this child is supposed to be and your kind of resistance to being irritated. I think you just need to embrace the irritation.

And you got to see if you really think those norms are outdated or if you kind of think that he should follow them. Because I think you kind of think he should follow them. And so sort of telling yourself that you know they're outdated but you secretly want him to follow them is not really helping you. You're just hiding the ball from yourself.

So like, what would it be to be like, this is my list of shoulds. He's not following them and I'm irritated. Right? But just like embrace that, be present with it, and try to be curious about it as opposed to kind of shoulding yourself that you shouldn't and telling yourself you can't stop

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yourself, right? You've got yourself in this kind of like, I'm victim to my own mind mentality here. And I think that's what's getting in your way.