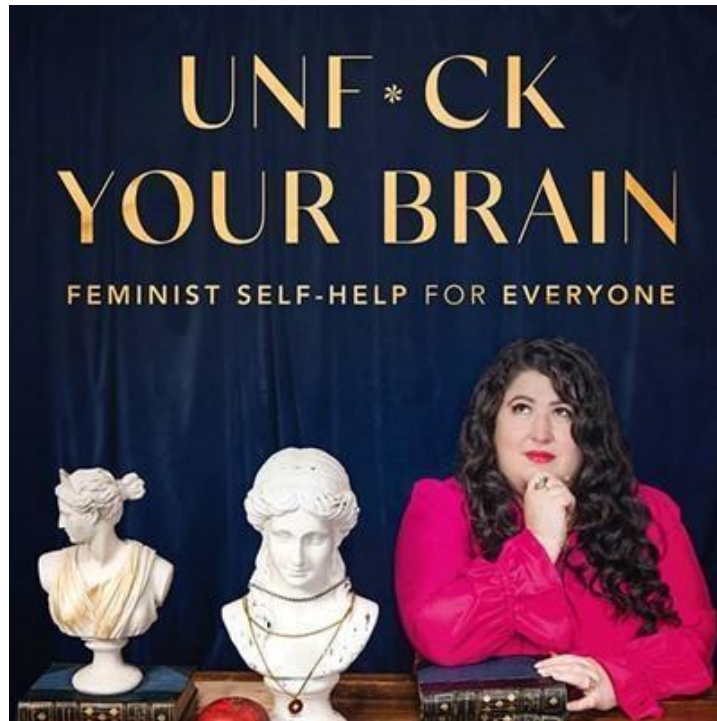


UFYB 463: Coaching Hotline: Believing Your Body is Attractive & Learning to Identify Your Emotions



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 your first question. "I've tried a million thought letters. I might be exaggerating." That's in the question that she might be exaggerating. "And can't stop despairing over my body or believing thoughts other than it has to look a certain way for a man to be attracted to it. I think part of the issue is that I know I am attracted to a more fit muscular body. Even if it's supposedly society culture that gave me those ideas, it's what turns my eye. Therefore, I don't believe myself when I say it doesn't matter. I've been battling this for all my adult life, approximately age 15 to 49 years old now."

Okay, so I love this question because there's a couple of things I think going on here that are going to be useful for so many of you. So, number one, I'm just going to work backwards, actually. Of course you don't believe yourself when you say it doesn't matter, because I don't think you've explored why you think it matters. I think that's the core issue here. Why does it matter if men are attracted to you? That's not just a given that it matters. Why does that matter? You have to figure out why that matters. And I can almost guarantee you that you are making something about your own worth or potential happiness depend on that.

UFYB 463: Coaching Hotline: Believing Your Body is Attractive & Learning to Identify Your Emotions

So even if it were true that no man in the whole world could be attracted to your body, you would still get to decide whether that matters and why and what you want to make it mean. And I don't think that you're examining that at all. You're just assuming that's important and has to happen.

So that's number one. Number two, you're conflating what you're attracted to with what other people are attracted to. You're attracted to a fit muscular body. Of course, because you hate your own body and believe that it needs to look different. So there's two fascinating things about this. Number one is you have this backwards. You think that you're attracted to fit muscular bodies and that's why you don't like your own. But it's the other way around. You don't like your body, so you don't like other people who have bodies like yours.

Okay, I'm going to say that again. You think that you don't like your own body because of what you're attracted to in other people. It's the other way around. You don't like how other people look if they look like you, because you don't like how you look. So your attraction to muscular fit bodies is because you have decided that your body is not okay unless it looks that way. So you're not attracted to people who don't look that way because you don't like the way you look and you don't think the way you look is attractive.

In addition, even if it were true that it matters for men to be attracted to you and that more men are attracted to fit muscular bodies, right, or whatever, it's impossible for it to be the case that there are no men who are attracted to other kinds of bodies. Even if that's the dominant ideal, all you have to do is look around you to see that lots of people are in relationships with people who aren't fit and muscular. Now, how can that be? How can any woman who's not whatever the certain way is have a male partner if it's true that men can't be attracted to them?

UFYB 463: Coaching Hotline: Believing Your Body is Attractive & Learning to Identify Your Emotions

So you have a lot of thought errors going on in here. My guess is that the real work you have to do is why it matters for men to be attracted to you. I think you think that's obvious and unquestioned, that it's important for people to be attracted to us or we have to have that in order to feel whatever. But I think what's happening is a vicious cycle where you don't love yourself or feel good about yourself. You think you need to have a partner in order to feel okay about yourself. And then you think, but men won't be attracted to me because of how I look. So it's just like this vicious cycle, right? You want a man to be attracted to you so that you can date them so that you can feel better about yourself. That would be my guess. I don't know your relationship status, but you don't talk about your partner, so it sounds to me like you may be single or dating.

But regardless, I think the three errors going on here is you're believing that what some men are attracted to is what all men are attracted to, despite the wealth of evidence in the world that's not true. You're not going to look for that evidence. Number two, you're confused about why you're attracted to what you're attracted to. You don't understand that you are rejecting people who look the way you think you look. You're attracted to what you've told yourself you need to look like, not the other way around. And number three, you don't understand why you think it matters.

So, I would do some thought work on why you think it matters and some thought work on why you're attracted to what you're attracted to. And I also would stop with the thought ladders because I think you're just doing them as an intellectual exercise. And I would go out and look for evidence that there are men who are attracted to bodies that look like yours. Like find people who have bodies your shape and size who have male partners and accumulate some of that evidence. You may also have to get your thought ladder to be much more, I mean, you could try another thought ladder if you make it much more laddery, right? Telling yourself it doesn't matter is obviously your goal thought that you don't possibly believe. So it would

UFYB 463: Coaching Hotline: Believing Your Body is Attractive & Learning to Identify Your Emotions

need to be a much easier starting place, like it's possible there are some men who would be attracted to my body. Like that's where I would start.

Okay, such a good question because I know that question asker is not alone.

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 M. Lee Ansk. I think that's how I would pronounce how that was written. And I love that she talks about having changed her all or nothing thinking in this review. She says, "Hands down the most inspiring podcast. Kara manages to take overwhelming topics and break them down in a manner that makes them easier to understand. I find that because of this, it's easier for me to implement changes into my life. As someone with the all or nothing mindset, having these complex feelings and emotional responses broken down and explained helps me make realistic changes. Before, I felt obligated to make all the changes at once and didn't understand why I couldn't instantly change. And then I'd inevitably feel discouraged from trying again. Please give this a shot. I've listened to her for about two years now and she was the guidance that I needed while getting my law degree."

UFYB 463: Coaching Hotline: Believing Your Body is Attractive & Learning to Identify Your Emotions

I absolutely love that you have gotten out of that all or nothing thinking and are able to actually make changes now. That is exactly why I do what I do.

Next question. "How is it that I have lived for years thinking I'm an overall happy person? And when I joined and began to try and describe the physical symptoms of a feeling, the only descriptions I can come up with are racing heart, stomach churning, and heart and throat. I cannot describe any other feeling. It's just empty, void, nothingness."

Okay, such an interesting question because I have to say, when I discovered thought work, I also probably would have described myself as an overall happy person. When I started paying attention, I was anxious all the time. And so I think there's two things going on there. I do think that I have always had a tendency to see good in the world or be optimistic from whatever baseline of terrible thoughts I had that I didn't know were thoughts. But basically, the thought I'm a happy person is just a thought, and it may or may not actually be true, right? You can think it and it's not actually true.

The descriptions you're coming up with sound to me like anxiety. Racing heart, stomach churning, heart and throat. You said you can't describe any other feelings. It's just an empty, void nothingness. Okay, so these are very evocative terms, right? And that's not really what we mean when we talk about describing a feeling. Racing heart, your heart beating fast, that is physically concrete. Stomach churning maybe. Heart and throat is not a concrete physical description. Your heart cannot be in your throat. So we don't really know what that means. So I think that you need to work on really describing those sensations physically, concretely, okay? Like so an alien could understand them.

The other thing is that it's totally normal, and this is why I really wanted to answer this question. It's totally normal for anxiety or another negative emotion to be the strongest and the only one you can access for a little

UFYB 463: Coaching Hotline: Believing Your Body is Attractive & Learning to Identify Your Emotions

while. Those are the strongest emotions and those are the ones you've been having the most. So that's pretty normal. I don't believe really it's true that you can't describe any other feeling. I just think you don't know how to do it yet. If you are a happy person, if you like have something you like doing or someone you love being around or whatever else, make a note to yourself to ask yourself how you know that, right? And check in with it.

So if you have a kid and you can feel love for your kid, how do you know that you're feeling love? What does that feel like? So I would look for things in your life where you believe you do have positive feelings about them, and then check in and see what your body feels like. But it's normal for it to be harder to describe than the negative ones, and it's normal for there to be something like anxiety or anger or shame, like some very strong negative emotion that you have most of the time and that you kind of have to learn how to process and resolve sometimes in order to get to the other feelings.

This is like a meta issue for all of you, not assuming that something has gone wrong in this thought work process. Just trying to trust the process and not try it once, try it twice, even try it 30 times and assume that it's not working, something's gone wrong. What if whatever you're experiencing, wherever you are, is exactly where you're supposed to be and exactly what you're supposed to be experiencing? Then you would be able to have patience with the process and try to trust it and keep practicing. Nothing has gone wrong. Whatever you are feeling or experiencing is fine. It's just an invitation to get to know yourself more and to learn something about yourself. Right? That's a thought that's always available to you.