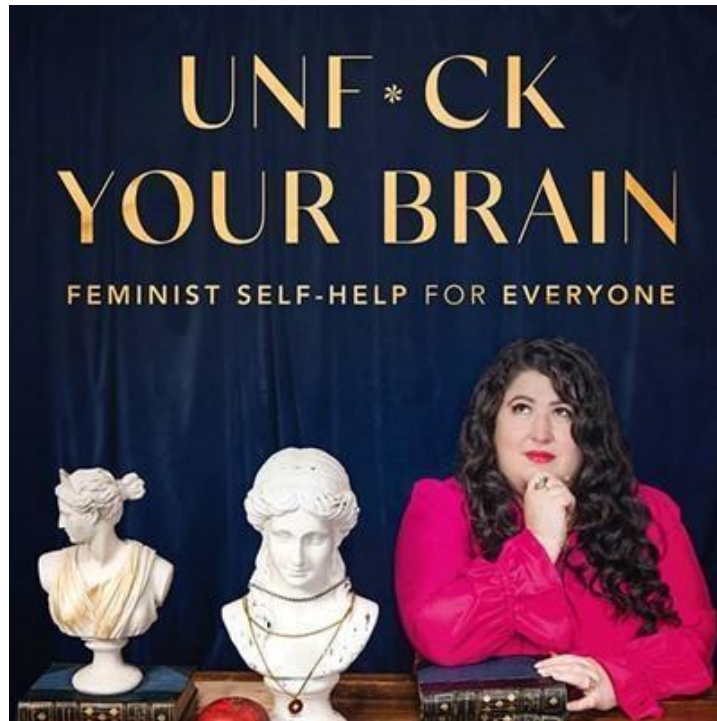


UFYB 465: Coaching Hotline: Hating Your Career Choice & Feeling Empty Inside



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. I think a lot of you can identify with this even if the details aren't quite your life. "I have a career that I do not enjoy in the health field and over \$170,000 in student loan debt for my doctor degree. I'm the first person in my family to attend college, and I think I went to grad school to make them happy and not me. My question is, how can I bring myself to feeling positive, proud, and happy when I do not enjoy my choice? My thoughts are, I ruined my life. I should have given my choice of profession, income, and debt amount more thought. I am a prisoner for the next six years while I repay my debt. I can't afford to go back to school. I can't afford to have kids with all this debt. I can't go part-time if needed if I have kids, due to my loan repayment terms, I need to be full-time. My feelings have ranged from anger to depression, anxiety, and helplessness. Please send help."

All right, help is here. So a couple of things that stand out to me about this question and why I wanted to answer it. The first one is that the question asker is reporting, "I do not enjoy my choice," as if that's a circumstance. And so I think that she is doing what a lot of you try to do, which is you have negative feelings about something, you intellectually understand it's just your thoughts, but you don't really understand it's just your thoughts.

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You know that's the right answer, but you still actually think that the circumstance causes it, and then you try to jump to feeling positive, proud, and happy.

And this question asker is not ready to feel positive, proud, and happy because she doesn't yet really understand that her thoughts are the only problem in this scenario. And she thinks, I don't enjoy my choice. That's just the weather. She's just reporting the weather. It's cloudy in San Diego and I don't enjoy the choice I made. But not enjoying my choice is for sure a thought. But it's also a result she's creating with all of these other thoughts. I ruined my life. I should have given this more thought. I'm a prisoner. I can't afford to go back to school. I can't have kids. I can't go part-time. She's got all of these thoughts that are making her a prisoner. Her own thoughts are making her a prisoner.

And so I can just tell from the way this is written that this question asker doesn't really understand that those are all optional thoughts, right? She thinks it's just true that she doesn't enjoy the choice and now she wants to try to feel positive, proud, and happy. But you won't be able to change your feelings until you really accept that nothing has gone wrong. You can't silver lining it, which means keeping your beliefs that you made a bad choice, that you don't enjoy your choice, which was a very polite way of saying, I made a bad choice, and still feel better about it.

Right? So all these thoughts that you're having are completely optional, and you have to really sit with that and see that the only thing going wrong for you right now is your belief that you ruined your life, that you did the wrong thing, that you're a prisoner, and that you can't afford to do anything that you want to do. All of those are optional and what's so powerful about the model and what it shows us is that you will make all of that come true for yourself. Not only emotionally, you already feel like a prisoner and feel like you ruined your life, but if your belief is always, I'm stuck here, I can't afford to do anything I want, all you will see is the evidence for that.

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Somebody whose thought was, wow, this doctorate is an amazing career move and I wonder what in the world I can do with it and what are other people with this doctorate doing that makes them tons of money and allows them to have flexible schedules and work on things they enjoy, right? If that was your thought, you'd be having a totally different experience right now. It's like I could choose to think, oh my God, why did I go to law school? Now I'm a life coach. That was such a waste of time. That was such a waste of money. Now I'm stuck. I could only be a lawyer, right? And even once I became a coach, why did I waste that time and why did I waste that money? And I could be farther in my career by now, right? I could have all those thoughts, but I don't.

I choose to believe on purpose that going to law school was an amazing idea and that it's made me such a better coach and that it enabled my whole career. The only difference is the thoughts. You know 100% there are people who have law degrees right now who are having all the same thoughts you do, and that's why they aren't changing their careers, they aren't changing their lives, they aren't starting families, whatever it is.

So I think that you really need to sit a little bit with this. You're not ready to go to positive, proud, and happy. You really got to sit with seeing how your thoughts are the only thing that's gone wrong here, that you did not make the wrong choice and that your not enjoying the choice is created by these thoughts. I think part of what's going on here is you're looking back and you're thinking, "Oh, I went to grad school to make them happy and not me." And so now that's a truth that I have to keep thinking and then that's going to color everything.

But that's not true. You get to decide why you went to grad school. You get to decide what to believe about that decision. You get to decide that you made it for great reasons if you want and that it was a great decision now. Your whole story about this is open to revision and is all optional. And trying to keep the story you have about it and then just feel better about it is

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going to be a real uphill battle. So I would try retelling yourself that story about why you went, change that story, and really spend some time sitting with all the power you are giving your degree over you and what you're making it mean.

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 is short but sweet and I love this reviewer's name, Going for Glitter. Says, "This is such a great dose of giving me what I need. It's such an easy lift to give myself a dose of good. Yay for Kara and this podcast. Love a long-time listener." I just love the idea that it's such an easy lift to just listen to something that's good for your mindset for 15 minutes and it might change your whole day.

All right, next question. "What do you suggest for someone that feels numb and disconnected to the point that negative and positive feelings towards yourself don't even feel like self-love or judgment? Everything feels like just a thought. The empty feeling makes me feel like even if I change the thought, the lack of connection to myself makes me feel even more hopeless. Self-love is not a concept I can practice."

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Okay, so number one, I don't know anything about this question asker or her care. Feeling very numb and disconnected can be a symptom of clinical depression, and so if that's how you feel and you have not gotten screened for depression, I would go get screened for depression. You may also, in addition to thought work, need psychiatric or psychological support or help. So I just want to say that, right? Numbness, disconnection, they persist, that can be a symptom of clinical depression. It can also be a thought, can be both, right? But you just want to get that screening done, get that taken care of, see what the deal is.

The other thing that I see going on here though is that you are still attributing all your feelings to your feelings, right? So you say everything feels like just a thought, and then you say the empty feeling makes me feel like even if I change the thought, the lack of connection to myself makes me feel hopeless. The feeling of emptiness is not doing that to you. In this situation, we could even put, "I feel empty," in the circumstance line. Okay, let's pretend that's a circumstance. That's true. You feel empty. Your thought about that is, I'm lacking a connection to myself. Even if I change the thought, it's hopeless.

You're making that empty feeling mean something and what you're making it mean is that even if you change your thoughts, you lack a connection to yourself and so it's hopeless. So important to see that. Let's say you think a thought and you feel quote unquote empty. Although I would really encourage you to dig into that because I don't exactly know what that means and I don't think you do either. It's a very evocative word. It's not really a physical sensation. But let's say you feel numb in your body. Your body feels numb, which again, I think you mean emotionally, but let's just say your body feels numb.

We put that in the circumstance line. When I practice a thought, my body feels numb. We put that in the circumstance line. Then your thought about that is, well, I don't have a good connection to myself. So even if I change

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my thought, this is hopeless. And that makes you feel even more terrible, right? So it's just important to see that you are having thoughts about how you feel when you practice thoughts.

Whereas for example, if somebody's thought was, I know I feel a little disconnected right now, that's a symptom of whatever, right? If you had depression, it might be, that's a symptom of depression that I'm working on and eventually it will pass, or even if it's not, I'm curious about this. Why do I feel disconnected? I actually had a day or two last week where I felt that way, which is quite unusual for me. I knew for me, I didn't need to go get screened for depression. It was kind of out of nowhere and I still was excited about things in my life. But I just emotionally, my body just felt a little dulled. I wasn't having the emotional responses to thoughts that I usually would have.

But my thought about it was not, oh my God, I have no connection to myself and now I feel hopeless, right? My thought about it was, oh, that's interesting. I'll see if this will pass in a few days. If not, maybe I'll look into it. I mean, if it had stuck around for a couple weeks, I might have gone to get my hormones checked or whatever, right? But my thought about it wasn't, well, thought work is now hopeless because I have a lack of connection to myself and so I have to give up. So you just have to see that you are, even if we take your numbness and disconnection to be a circumstance, your own thoughts about that are making this feel so much worse to you because you're making it mean that there's no point in changing your thoughts and so this is all hopeless.

And I think this is your brain doing a very complicated defense mechanism. Your brain is saying, "Well, you already feel numb so there's no point changing your thought. You'll just feel hopeless." It's just another version of your brain saying, don't bother doing thought work. So the place I would start is really what you make that numbness or disconnection mean. Let's take for granted that numbness and disconnection exist. Let's pretend

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that's a circumstance. A, if this has been going on for a while and you feel flat like that, get screened for depression.

But two, whether or not you do end up with a diagnosis, right, what you make that disconnection or numbness mean, what you make that flatness mean is still going to be a huge thing to do thought work on. And right now you're making it mean it's hopeless and there's no point in changing my thoughts, it won't make a difference. And that's not the only thing that you can think about feeling disconnected or numb. So that's where I would start with that.