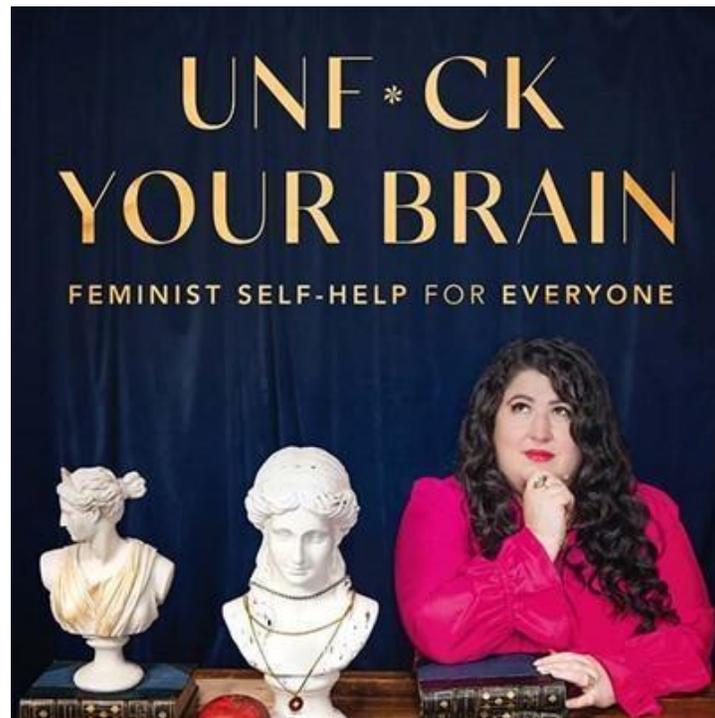


UFYB 475: Coaching Hotline: Feeling Defensive v Accepting Feedback & How to Know When You've Coached Yourself Correctly



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 coaching hotline, all one word. Let's get into this week's questions.

This first question, I actually got two almost identical questions, but they were from different people. So I'm kind of answering them both at once. One was, "Hi Kara, how can we apply thought work when receiving professional feedback? If someone has a complaint about us or our work, of course we can know that we don't cause their feelings. But sometimes others may be offering valid feedback that's hard to hear. So how can we manage our minds to discern what we can use and what is not true or helpful without being defensive?" Great question.

Then the other question was, which is very similar, "How do you work through thoughts of failure or being attacked when a client points out a mistake or wants to change something?" So they're pretty related, and I'm just going to answer them both together.

The whole reason that something is hard to hear is our thoughts about it. It's the same way that if you feel attacked, it's your thought about it. Why is it a problem if a client wants to change something or spots a mistake? Only

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because of what you make it mean. Why is some feedback hard to hear? Only because of what you make it mean. Right? It's always your thoughts.

And there's a reason that I sort of teach in this particular sequence. There is sometimes something useful in feedback that other people give you, and I think it is a good idea to try to be open to that and really consider it. For a lot of us though, we have to go through an intermediate step where we work on believing that it's possible that the feedback has nothing to do with us, that it's not automatically right if it's critical and that other people's thoughts are what cause their feedback, not our personal failings. Right?

It's like we have to build up both our own self-esteem, right, our own love and acceptance for ourself, even if we've made a mistake or whatever. And we have to build up disconnecting our response from what other people say. So understanding that other people just have models also and their feedback is totally subjective and it doesn't mean anything about us.

So we have to do that work first. When you've done that work, you'll know because feedback doesn't bother you, positive or negative. It goes both ways. It's like I get tons of feedback. I get feedback from strangers all the time who email me or leave comments on Facebook ads or posts I've made on Instagram or whatever. And some of it's positive and some of it's negative. And I honestly feel the same way about both. Neither one of those gets a rise out of me. Like the positive doesn't get a positive hit of validation out of me, and the negative doesn't get a negative rise out of me. Because I've so disconnected what I think about myself and my own work from other people's thoughts and I know that has nothing to do with me.

Now, occasionally, someone does point out something that I actually do want to change, right? Sometimes someone does point out that I've left something out or like haven't considered this point of view or what about

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this idea or like I could have coached differently in that situation. If I get that, then I'm interested and I want to hear it and think about it.

But this question is, "How can I see whether feedback is valid when it's hard to hear?" And it's like, that's the wrong question. The question is, why is this hard to hear? What's my thought about this feedback? Why is it hard to hear? Right? It's not like, what can I do when I feel attacked? It's why do I feel attacked? What am I making this mean? Somebody pointing out a mistake I made is not an attack unless I believe it is one and think that way.

So the answer to how you can discern what you want to use and what's not true or helpful, you actually can't even tell that until you've completely disconnected it from what you think and feel about yourself. Like your self-acceptance and your self-regard and your love for others, right, until all of that is solid. Until other people are truly neutral and you love and accept yourself no matter what. Then you're totally able to. It's just like apologizing. Like when we feel super defensive, we don't want to apologize. And it's like we have to do the work first to feel okay, not apologizing and understanding those thoughts belong to someone else and it's their responsibility.

And then when we get through that part, we find, oh, it's actually quite easy to apologize. Like it doesn't cost me anything and it's fine. Because we're not feeling defensive. We're not making it mean that there's something wrong with us for being wrong or like it's wrong to apologize. So it all comes back to what do you make it get mean and why are you're feeling defensive. Worry about that part first. The equation is not let me figure out how to discern what's helpful when I'm feeling defensive. The question is like, how do I make sure I don't feel defensive? What's that work that brings me to a place where I'm not defensive? Then it's going to become so much more naturally clear to me what's useful and what's not.

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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 BP Writer. "Great podcast. Recently found this podcast and am enjoying it. Episode 312 with guest Dr. Adrian Mann and Dr. Tyra Fainstad about their peer-reviewed research study was fantastic. Finally, someone has proven scientifically that coaching actually works to dramatically improve self-compassion, burnout, anxiety among so many other things. So much helpful information in this episode."

This next one is also actually about work. So we got a little work mini episode. "A few months ago, the engineering team of the small startup I was working at was acquired by a much larger company. The new company is really great to work for, makes clear that I'm valued. Objectively, it's a great place to be." That's definitely not objective. Right? That's a thought. Just remember, even your positive thoughts are still thoughts. They're not circumstances.

"But I'm still feeling a lot of emotion and grief around this unexpected change. Plus, I'm having a lot of compelling thoughts about going full-time

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into my own business. In my self-coaching, I have noticed thoughts like, 'I should be feeling better by now.' I'm addressing those, but I also feel like I'm missing something still. I would love to hear your thoughts about the process of grief. What's worth feeling grief about? Parentheses, anything I want as long as I like my results, exclamation point. And how long it should, quote unquote, last. Parentheses, as long as I want, as long as I like my results, end parentheses. I want some broader perspectives to try on for size."

Okay, so I just love this question and the reason I picked it is that you already know the answers. There's no other perspective, right? Those are the answers. You guys already know the answers. You really want to pay attention when you're like, "I feel like I'm missing something." That's not a feeling. That's a thought. I'm still missing something. And it's so interesting. I've been thinking about this because I see this come up a lot. You guys will coach yourselves and sometimes you do get it. You see everything that's happening and then you'll say, "I think I'm still missing something." And I think what that means is you expect when you get it, there will be like instant resolution. Like a light bulb will go off or you won't have those negative thoughts anymore or everything will become clear.

And that's not what happens. So if you're missing anything, what you're missing is you have the wrong expectation of how you'll feel if you're doing thought work about something. Like in this situation, this person's deciding about going full-time into her own business or not. There isn't going to be a lightning moment. She's not missing a coaching tool that would tell her which thing to do. The coaching tool is just you make a decision, then you manage your mind about that decision. Doesn't matter which one you make. You'll have to manage your mind either way and don't spend time thinking about it. Just make a decision because you're thinking about it's not going to get you anywhere. Make a decision, then manage your mind.

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So yeah, you could say she's missing that tool, but I really think this idea of like I understand the answers and I've done the thought work and I'm processing my emotions, I think I'm missing something, is like so small and sort of insidious but important because you're not missing anything. This is the work. It's living a human life, managing your mind without it being like a rollercoaster of excitement or without like perfect resolution or an answer descending from the heavens or whatever else.

She has this thought, "I should be feeling better by now," but she's already noticed that's a thought and that it's getting in her way. So she's not missing anything. All there is to work on those thoughts. She already knows the answers. What's worth feeling grief about? Whatever you want. How long it should last? As long as you want it to last.

So that's what I want to tell you guys. Like when you know the answers, you already know the answers, but be careful about this like I'm still missing something. Ask yourself how you know that. How do you know you're missing something? Is it because you don't feel magically resolved? Is it because you didn't have like an exciting dopamine-producing revelation? Is it because like the decision hasn't magically clarified itself? Like how do you know you're missing something? That's an important question to ask yourself because often you're not missing anything.

There's a difference between like, "I'm stuck in my thought work. I can't figure this out," or like, "I've decided somehow this circumstance doesn't apply to you." That's when you need coaching. And like, I actually know the answers and this is just part of being a human who manages their mind is that it's like just kind of how we do it. We just like keep going and working on it. That doesn't mean you're missing anything. That is the work.