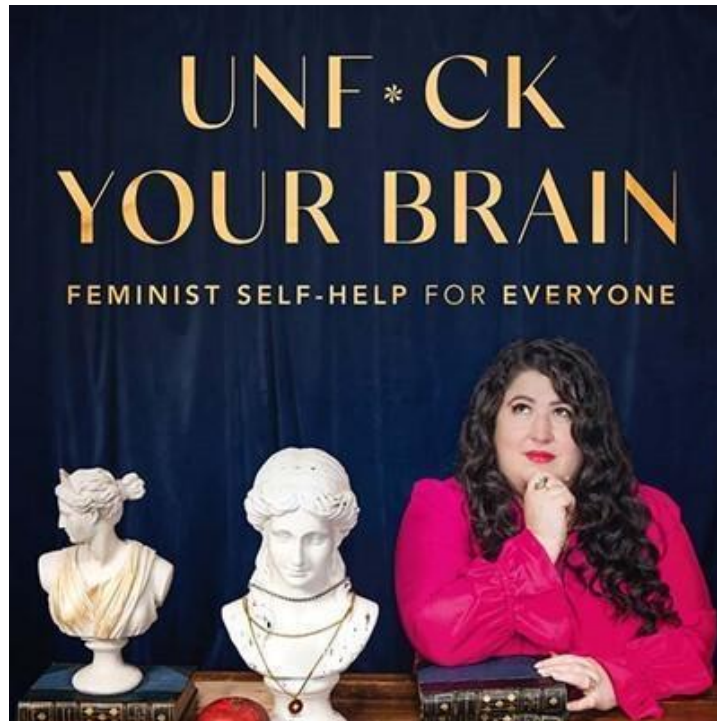


**UFYB 486: The Last 5% -
The Secret to Completing Any Goal**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

[UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](#)

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

Hello my friends. So, if you are up-to-date on the podcast, last week, you re-listened or listened for the first time to The Infinite 1%. And the whole idea in that episode is about how the gap between doing nothing and doing something is actually the biggest gap in the world, that we tend to look at how far we have to go when we're trying to achieve a goal, but we underestimate how big a deal it is that we actually got started.

And so I've been thinking about that concept in conjunction with a new mirror image idea that I want to share with you guys that I think is equally important. Because while the beginning of starting something new or going after a big goal is hard, there's another moment that trips people up just as much, and it often happens close to the end, when you've done a lot or most of the work, but you don't quite have the return or the outcome yet, or you don't know how far you are from that return or outcome.

So something's not working immediately, or you have to wait, or there's a hiccup or a challenge or a string of rejections or a bunch of failures, and the finish line feels really far away. But instead of looking at it objectively, your brain immediately turns it into a verdict about who you are and whether you were ever meant to try in the first place and how you're a failure who can't achieve their goals.

And so that's what I want to talk about today. I'm calling this The Last 5%. And I wanted to make this episode because I coach women in my Mission Impossible Mastermind all the time who are going after what I genuinely call impossible goals. They've got big career changes or business goals, life pivots, creative projects that require them to become a really different version of themselves. And I see how this pattern threatens to stop people in their tracks because they get so far, and then one thing doesn't go as planned, and their brain immediately turns that into an indictment of everything else. And they start to believe that they asked for too much, they're not capable, the whole thing was a mistake from the beginning.

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

And so today, I want to make a really clear case for you about why jumping to that conclusion is not just unhelpful, it's also logically and factually incorrect, and why understanding how to approach the last 5% might be one of the most important things you ever do for your goals. So let's get into it.

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.

So here's what happens, what I see happen all the time with the women I coach, and I want you to see if this sounds familiar. You work really hard on something, you're making real progress, things are actually moving forward, and then something or a few things don't go the way you want it to, and you just stop.

And this can play out in so many different ways, right? Maybe you spend months building something in your business. You put together an offer you're actually proud of. You launch it, and it does not sell the way you hoped. And instead of getting curious about what to tweak, you quietly shelve the whole thing, and you tell yourself it was probably a bad idea anyway and you should do something totally new. And there's no shame. I literally almost did this myself last year and caught myself just in time. So we've all been there, but it's good to notice what it looks like.

Or maybe you go on a bunch of dates. You really put yourself out there. You try to be open and vulnerable, and none of them turn into something real, or you get into a relationship but it doesn't last. And you just decide you're someone who can't find a partner, right? And that the breakup only confirms that. And you start to see yourself that way rather than someone who's getting closer and closer to what you want.

[UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](#)

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

Or maybe you commit to trying to change some health markers and blood tests, and you eat more fiber, you walk more, you show up for yourself every single day, but your cholesterol doesn't budge. And so you eventually just give up and you go back to how things were before.

Or maybe you've been working on something creative, a book or a podcast or a business idea you've been sitting on for years. You finally get brave enough to put it out in the world, and you get some feedback that stings, or you don't get any feedback because people don't seem interested. And so you just stop. You put it back in the drawer, and you tell yourself you're just not ready yet or it was never meant to be.

I get why this happens, of course. I have a human brain. When something seems like it isn't working, that feels awful and it feels personal. But here's what's actually going on. You are focusing on only the endpoint, and you're ignoring everything that built up to and supports the endpoint. It's very black-and-white thinking, as if progress or results are an on-or-off switch. Like they either exist or they don't, with no in-between, which is not true.

A result is the outcome of a million steps you take towards it. And if you make a wrong turn along the way, that doesn't mean you aren't capable of retracing your steps and trying again. When you make a wrong turn following GPS directions, the GPS doesn't just go blank and tell you, "Now you live here at Exit 10A because you got off the highway a mile too early." But that's what we do with our own lives and goals we've worked so hard on. We just give up if we don't get there on our expected timeline, and then we make it mean that we can't get there at all.

Before we go any further, let me explain where this actually comes from, because when you understand the root of it, it changes so much about how you relate to your own goals. Women are socialized from a really young age to be perfectionists. We talk about this all the time on this podcast, right? In this deep visceral way where falling short of a result or an outcome

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

or a goal doesn't just feel disappointing, it feels life-threatening, right? It feels like evidence that you are fundamentally not enough. And that is a really important distinction.

Because it means that when you get close, you don't see or feel the progress. And actually, sometimes it feels worse to get close, because now it's like you tried and you maybe let yourself get your hopes up, and it still didn't work. And then your brain treats that as more proof of what you already suspected about yourself, that you are not good enough.

If you have spent your whole life believing that making partner at your firm or getting married or hitting a certain revenue number or whatever is what's going to finally prove that you're worthy and capable and enough, then getting 95% of the way there and not quite making it does not feel like, "Oh, I almost got there." It's not a silver medal. Instead, it feels like you've failed more visibly than if you had never tried at all, at least to yourself.

And so we develop this very black-and-white relationship with our goals, where the only thing that registers as meaningful is whether we got the result or we did not. And we fixate entirely on the destination, and we kind of roll our eyes at the idea that the journey even matters, because we've given the destination so much power over how we feel about ourselves that all we can think about is getting there.

And I think we do this partly because we've been taught that the goal is supposed to make us happy, that once we get there, we'll finally feel the way we've been waiting to feel. So of course, all we want is to just be there already. And of course, the process feels like an inconvenience rather than something worth paying attention to.

But here is the problem with that logic, because if the only evidence your brain will accept as proof that you're capable is getting the exact final

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

outcome you wanted, then you've set up a system where you're always either winning completely or failing completely. And there's no such thing as useful information, no such thing as progress, no such thing as two steps forward, one step back. There's just got it or did not get it.

And that is an extraordinarily expensive way to move through your life, because it means every attempt that does not land perfectly is just more evidence for the prosecution, more proof of what your brain has been arguing all along, which is that you're not quite enough to have what you want.

When you make the result the only thing that can count as evidence of your worth or progress, you end up in this exhausting cycle of chasing the goal, not because you actually want the thing itself, but because you believe the thing is going to make you feel worthy or happy or finally enough. And it also makes the whole process feel terrible, because every moment you're not at the goal, the only other way you know how to think is that if you're not there, that means you haven't done it, that means you're not good enough.

And by definition, for any goal, you will spend way more time working on achieving a goal than you spend in the few glorious moments of achieving it, right? And once you get used to having achieved it, it stops being exciting again. So most of the time, you are not in the flush of excitement of achievement, which lasts like 5 to 10 minutes.

And that's the cruel irony of this cycle. Even when you do get the result, it doesn't actually deliver the feeling you were promised, because the feeling was never in the result to begin with, right? It was always in the thought that you were going to think when you got there. And so if you haven't changed your thoughts, if you haven't appreciated the progress, if you haven't been giving yourself kudos all along the way, getting to that space,

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

getting that achievement doesn't feel good for long. It falls away, and you immediately start chasing the next thing.

So you just move the goalpost. You start chasing the next thing and the next thing and the next thing, always believing that you're one achievement away from finally feeling the way you want to feel. And this is one of the most common patterns I see in high-achieving women.

And beyond that, this way of thinking completely blinds you to everything you're actually learning and becoming along the way. Because when the destination is the only thing that matters, you cannot see the growth that's happening right in front of you, and you can't build on what is working, because you are too busy declaring the whole thing a failure. And thinking this way doesn't just feel bad, it actually makes you significantly less likely to achieve the goal you're going after, because when every attempt that doesn't land perfectly is treated as a verdict rather than data, your brain starts doing what's actually a rational calculation, which is the risk of trying is not worth the cost of failing, because it's all or nothing.

And so it starts finding creative ways to keep you from trying or to get you to give up. It creates procrastination and perfectionism and all of these avoidance strategies that feel like you're being careful or realistic, but are actually just your brain trying to protect you from the feeling of falling short one more time. And so the very pattern that's supposed to be pushing you towards your goal is actually keeping you from it.

So we're going to take a quick break right now, but stick around because after this, I'm going to walk you through how to actually change this and see it differently so that you can more easily keep going until you succeed.

Welcome back, my friends. All right, so I want to give you a metaphor for how misplaced this all-or-nothing thinking about goals that we're talking

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

about is. I think it'll make it really easy for you to see what the alternative way of thinking is before I even spell it out for you.

So let's say you're a competitive ice skater. You train for years, you sacrifice, you show up every single day even when you don't want to. And the first couple of times you try, you don't make it to nationals, to the national competition. But listen, you keep going. You're not going to be one of those people who gives up immediately. You make it to nationals for the first time, and in a movie, this would be the feel-good moment where you win at nationals. But that's not what happens. This is reality, and you don't medal. You finally made it and you don't medal.

In that moment, you have two choices about how to interpret this. You can tell yourself that none of the training was worth it. You are clearly not cut out for this. You're never going to succeed. You should just stop because you were willing to fail not getting to nationals and keep going. You were willing to be persistent for some amount of time, but now you got there and you still didn't win. So obviously all of those previous failures were objectively correct. You don't deserve to be there. You got there this time on a fluke, but you didn't win because you're not good enough.

Or you can tell yourself, "Well, I never used to get to nationals at all. Now I did get to nationals. So I learned something, I changed something that got me to nationals. And now I just need to change the next thing that's going to allow me to win next time." Any serious athlete has to think this way because if they didn't, they would all have quit before the Olympics could ever be held. It's not just one perfect attempt followed by arrival at the destination. That's not how achieving goals works.

And it's not even just the minimal acceptable amount of failure you've decided to allow and then winning before you can really get emotionally challenged by getting close. I think this is for people who are already high-achieving. We're willing to allow a certain amount of failure as long as it's

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

not uncomfortable. But then once it gets uncomfortable, that's when we start questioning ourselves.

In reality, to get to a goal, you have to get a little further each time. In this metaphor, it means refusing to let not winning at nationals be the end of your story or a reason to give up. So if you don't win at nationals, what do you do instead of giving up? You sit down and you think about and diagnose what happened. And the answer is never just, "I'm not good enough."

Did you lose because you fell on a jump and you need to work on the landing on that one jump? Did you lose because you don't have enough artistic moves and you need to hire a choreographer who specializes in that? Did you lose because your competitors were doing more difficult spins and you need to master them? Did you lose because you had an off night because you partied too much the week before and next time you need to try going to bed earlier? It could be anything, but you look at it and you look at the data and you see what thing you actually need to change.

And the same is true for a professional endeavor in your real life. Most of you are not Olympic figure skaters. I don't know, maybe some of you are. You launch an offer in your business. People sign up for your free thing, and then they sign up for your bootcamp, and then they come to the call where you're going to share the offer with them, and then they don't buy the offer. Or they open your emails, they click to your sales page, and then they don't buy. You're successfully doing most of the process. Your problem is just at that last moment of conversion.

Same thing if you're trying to get a promotion or a raise, right? If you're still employed and you're getting positive reviews and your boss is open to the conversation, and then you don't get the raise, that doesn't mean it's time to give up. It means it's time to try to reverse engineer and diagnose exactly what's happening at that last 5% of the process that you need to tweak.

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

If you are going on dates and you're getting to a bunch of third dates but not to a fourth date, that doesn't mean you're not someone who can get to a fourth date. It means you got to look at how are you approaching what's happening on the third date? Is it turning out that you don't like any of these people on the third date because you were ignoring your thoughts about them on the first couple of dates? Is it that you are, whatever you're doing, trauma dumping on the third date and you should wait till you know the person better? Who knows? You have to look at what's happening, but appreciate how far you have come.

When you look at how far you have come, you build that identity of being someone who can figure this out, who's already figured out three-quarters or four-fifths or nine-tenths of the process, and just needs to figure out the next little bit. The person running a million-dollar business is someone who launched a lot of stuff that didn't sell as well as she wanted. The person in the relationship of her dreams is someone who went on a lot of dates that didn't work out and went through a bunch of breakups. They didn't get what they wanted because they're more talented or more lucky or more deserving than you.

They got there because every single time something did not work, they got curious about what to fix instead, and they didn't collapse into a story about what it meant about them. They asked themselves, "What is the last 5% I need to figure out?" And then they figured it out. And then they did that process again because that's one thing that's really important to understand. If you're listening to this, you're saying, "But I'm not at 95%. I've just started. I'm only at 40%. I'm not even getting that promotion conversation with my boss. I haven't gotten to nationals," whatever it is.

It doesn't matter. The question you need to ask yourself is the same either way. What's the next 5% I need to figure out to get to the next milestone? Between me and the next milestone, what is the next 5%? What is the next little piece of the sequence that I can try to understand and tweak? If you

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

only got to 5%, that just means your last 5% right now is figuring out how you get to 6% or 7% or 10%.

So the next time something does not work the way you wanted it to, before you let your brain start building a case against you, I want you to do one thing. I want you to ask yourself, "What portion of this did I just prove I know how to do?" And I want you to actually write it down. Write down every single stage of the process you completed. And then I want you to look at that list and recognize that you've been trained your entire life to discount this kind of evidence, and that you haven't even noticed you're doing it, because it's so automatic to dismiss everything you've already done as not being important, not being relevant, being something anyone could do, and not mattering.

And I want you to think about how much that's costing you. Because that list you just wrote down is real evidence of real capability that you have built, and it belongs to you permanently. Not getting the final outcome yet does not erase a single thing on that list. It just means there's one specific thing left to figure out, either to finish the process or to get to your next milestone.

Every single time you choose to ask yourself, "What is the last 5% of this I need to figure out?" instead of just declaring yourself a failure, you're doing something that goes so much deeper than just staying positive or being resilient. You're choosing to be your own most reasonable and supportive witness instead of your harshest judge. I'm not even talking about being super positive about yourself. We're just talking about looking at the facts.

And over time, that changes not just how you pursue goals, but who you understand yourself to be. Because the woman who asks, "All right, what is the 5% of this I need to tweak to get there?" is someone who fundamentally believes she can figure it out. And that belief compounds. So every time you get to 95% and you stay in the game, your capacity grows. Your next

UFYB 486: The Last 5% - The Secret to Completing Any Goal

attempt starts from a higher floor than your last one did. You're not starting over, you're starting from experience as someone who has the identity of an effective person who's already figured out most of this. There's an enormous difference between how that feels and how it feels to tell yourself that you're starting over from zero.

Starting from experience means you're bringing everything you just learned into your next attempt, and your next attempt begins where this one ended. And if you keep doing that, if you keep refusing to let the last 5% be a verdict on your worth, and you keep treating it as just information, what happens over time is truly extraordinary, because the version of success you end up living is something your earlier self could not have even imagined was available to her.

So between The Infinite 1% and The Last 5%, you take both those lessons to heart and practice them, and you will become someone who can achieve any goal and who understands herself as someone who gets it done, whatever it is, whatever she wants, no matter what. I'll talk to you all next week.