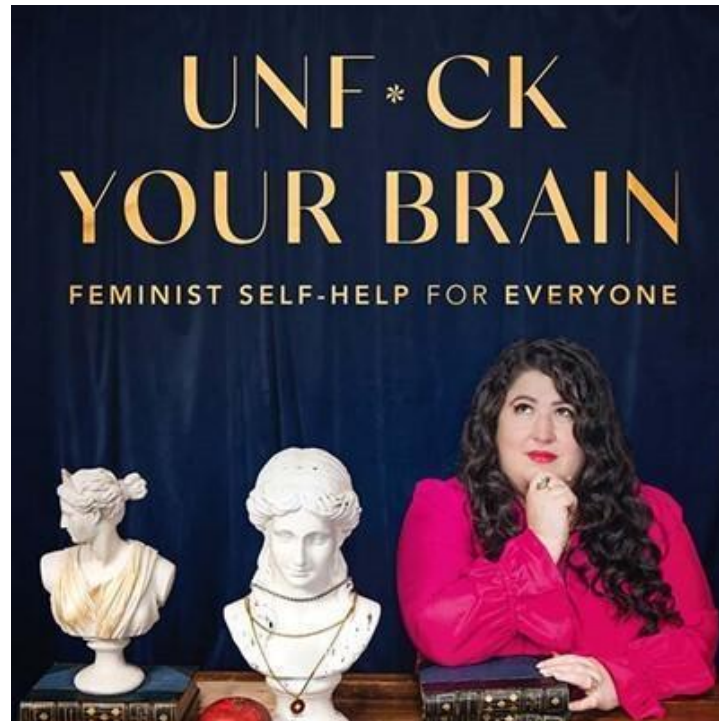


UFYB 487: Coaching Hotline: Learning to Love Your Body & Navigating Unclear Expectations at Work



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.

First question is a short one, but I think a lot of you struggle with it, so that's why I wanted to address it. So the question asker says, "I'm stuck in believing that my body is a human body. I've gained weight recently, and I'm having a hard time loving myself and not making my weight gain mean something about me. How can I learn to love my body when I keep thinking that my fat gain is causing me health issues?"

Okay, so there are so many important assumptions embedded in this, and it's such a common theme. So number one, just notice. Let's think about this. If your brain had the agenda that there's something wrong with your body, what would we expect? We would expect that, let's say it focused on what you look like. And then if we removed that, it would then just focus on your health or focus on the next thing, right? Your brain has an agenda that there's something wrong with your body. That's a thought pattern you've had for so long. And we know that brains like to double down. So if you start believing that it's okay for your body to look the way it does, your brain just looks for something else to tell you is wrong with your body. So that's number one is just noticing what the brain patterns are.

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Number two, you've got health and weight all conflated here, which is common because we're not taught the correct science about this. I really encourage any of you who think that weight and health are synonymous to dive into the health at any size movement and read the real research on weight and health. Basically, everything you've been told about weight and health is wrong, is the short version. Weight itself does not cause health problems, and losing weight does not resolve health problems.

There is something called metabolic syndrome, which is basically insulin resistance that leads to instabilities in your blood sugar and in your insulin release and uptake by your cells. And that is sometimes associated with weight gain and sometimes not. But that is what causes actual health problems. And so you can be thin and have metabolic syndrome, and you can be fat and not. They are not actually causally related. And when losing weight does happen to impact a health problem, if it can be maintained, which is often not the case, it's because the weight is like the side effect of resolving the metabolic syndrome.

Sometimes the lifestyle changes that help improve metabolic syndrome also may create some weight loss. But you can improve your health markers and improve metabolic syndrome without ever losing weight, just by changing your lifestyle, which usually means more exercise and keeping an eye on not just eating carbs, which are fine, but if you eat a lot of refined carbs with no protein or fat, that can cause a blood sugar spike.

So the conflation of weight and health is so problematic, and we all just believe it. And so you are believing that your fat is causing you health issues, that your weight gain is causing you health issues, when the truth is, you really have no idea if that's the case. And a lot of it has to do with what created that weight gain. Is what created that weight gain potentially, if you really are having a health problem, is that what's maybe creating the health problem, whether that's like a medication side effect or from a change in behavior or whatever? And the weight really has nothing to do

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with it. The amount of fat cells in your body actually doesn't have anything to do with it.

So you have to divorce this automatic equation with weight gain and health. And this is like, you know, weight stigma and healthcare is a huge issue because fat people go to the doctor and just no matter what is wrong with them, they're told to lose weight, even though weight loss really wouldn't change anything for them.

So that's number one. The even deeper, more radical concept here is that even if you gained weight and weight had an impact on your health, that would be okay. In the sense of there is no moral value on health. It is not morally better to be in quote-unquote better health. We have a real obsession with health in our current society, and we completely have linked it to morality.

So we think it's more virtuous to be healthy and it's like sinful or terrible to have a health problem, especially if it's a health problem that is ever impacted by a behavior, like lung cancer and smoking, or, I mean, diabetes actually has a genetic predisposition. If you're genetically predisposed to diabetes, it's unlikely that you can go your whole life without having it, although you can sometimes hold it off with behavioral modification. If you don't have the gene, I believe it's almost impossible for you to develop type two diabetes, no matter what you eat. But of course, most of society doesn't know that. So we have all of this like shame and stigma around diabetes because it's a health situation that people think is caused by personal behavior, particularly eating, which is the most moralized thing.

So you really have to break this association between health and morality also. You've got the issue a little confused for yourself also because you're actually asking two different questions, right? You're like, I'm making my weight gain mean something about me. And your thought is like, well, because my fat gain has caused me health issues. So of course I have to

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make that mean something about me. But it's two different assumptions there that you have to unpack.

One is that your waking caused your health issue. And the second is that has to mean something about you, that it's morally a problem if you have a health consequence. We all drive cars, which is quite dangerous, but we don't ever say to each other like, well, you really should take better care of yourself and not drive a car. Seriously. We all do lots of things that can have health consequences. Over-exercising can be bad for your health, but we never say that to people. We don't think like, how could you do that to yourself when you run a marathon?

So you got to break down the association between weight and health, and you have to break down the association between health and morality. That's a lot to work on, so you can start anywhere.

Alright, 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.

Today's review comes from Alice Palace 2. She says, "So great. I discovered Kara's podcast about a month ago and have been binge

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listening ever since. I often feel sad when an episode ends and cue up another one. My favorite episode so far has been 'Borrow My Thoughts,' in which she shares how she changed her dating life by thinking, women my size have found love, or her career by thinking, dumber people than me have succeeded in this area." Honestly, still one of my best thoughts. "Since then, I find myself spontaneously coming up with useful reframes like, I can handle doing tasks with subroutines, when I think it's too hard to get my water bottle out of my backpack or send an email from a new platform. And suddenly, it's not too hard at all, and I finished before I know it. Kara's thought work is improving my life already, just from listening to her share about it."

I love this so much because honestly, I do this too. My brain is like, I can't possibly do that task. And I'm like, I bet you can, though. You probably, I think we can do it. And then we do. Those little bits of self-talk throughout the day make a world of difference.

Here's a second question. Totally different topic, but I love this one. "My job is as a web designer, and I'm constantly frustrated because I never know if I'm doing a good enough job, what my role is, or whether I'm meeting expectations. I've asked my boss how he would recognize success for his employee, what his ideal is for my role, and he said that if no one is shouting at me, if he continues to give me work, if we continue to get things done. He wants an employee who can build websites because he can't do it anymore. That's probably the most specific piece of feedback I've gotten. I'm thinking about getting a new job because I want to make more money and I don't want to carry this pattern with me into a new job. Also, it is just super painful and I'm not able to see this clearly. How do I clean all this up? I'm so sick of this experience."

All right, so number one, as always, if you're resisting the experience, you are going to prolong it. Number two, I find this question fascinating because you asked your boss what success was, he told you what it is, and you are

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continuing to believe somehow that it's very painful. And I can't really tell from this question why this is painful for you, what your thoughts are about it, but I just want you to think about this. Your whole problem is you want someone to validate that you are doing a good job. You asked him what his expectations for success were and he told you. He said, if no one shouts at you, if I keep giving you work, and if we keep getting stuff done, then you can know that you're doing a good job. So is that the case? Is no one shouting at you? Is he continuing to give you work? Are things getting done? Then congratulations, you're doing a good job.

I picked this question because I want you guys to see this is what we do. We think that if someone just clarified X, Y, Z, or explained this thing to us, or gave us this information, we would feel so much better. Then we ask for it and we get it, and it doesn't make a difference at all. We just keep thinking our same thoughts. You asked him how to know if you're doing a good job, and he told you. And from what I can tell, I think you meet those three criteria, but you continue to tell yourself that it's impossible to know if you're doing a good enough job or if you're meeting expectations.

I understand that you think that's not what it should be, that you think there should be better criteria or more specific goals or whatever. You don't like what his expectations are. You don't think that they're clear enough or specific enough or whatever else. But you asked and he gave them to you, and it sounds to me like you are meeting those. And yet you are torturing yourself with your own thoughts that you can't know if you're doing a good enough job, you can't know what your role is, and you can't know whether you're meeting expectations, even though he told you what he wants you to do and how to know. Right? It's just such a beautiful example of how we create all of our own suffering so unnecessarily.

All you need to do is decide that you're doing a good job. There's no such thing as doing a good enough job. That's not a thing that exists outside of you. There's just people's thoughts about it. He's already told you his

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thought is that you are. But you can't accept that because your thought is that you aren't or that it's unclear. So that's what you have to give up. What if it wasn't unclear at all? What if you were doing a good job? What if you just believed that? You're looking outside of yourself for more clarity or feedback about it that you don't need and wouldn't help. It doesn't matter what he would say to you, you would keep having these thoughts.

You think it's a circumstance that you don't know if you're doing a good job. You think it's a circumstance that you don't know what your role is, and you think it's a circumstance if you don't know that you're meeting expectations. And I want you to consider that none of those are circumstances. They are all optional thoughts. I'm not doing a good enough job, or I don't know if I'm doing a good enough job. I don't know what my role is. I don't know if I'm meeting expectations. Those are not just observations of the things you know and don't know. Those are thoughts that you can change.

So what would it be like if your thoughts were, I'm doing a good job, I know what my role is, I'm meeting expectations. That's what I really want you to think about. I think you think those are things that a person could just know or not know and you happen to not know them. But that's not true. They're just thoughts. That's it for this week. I'll talk to you next week.