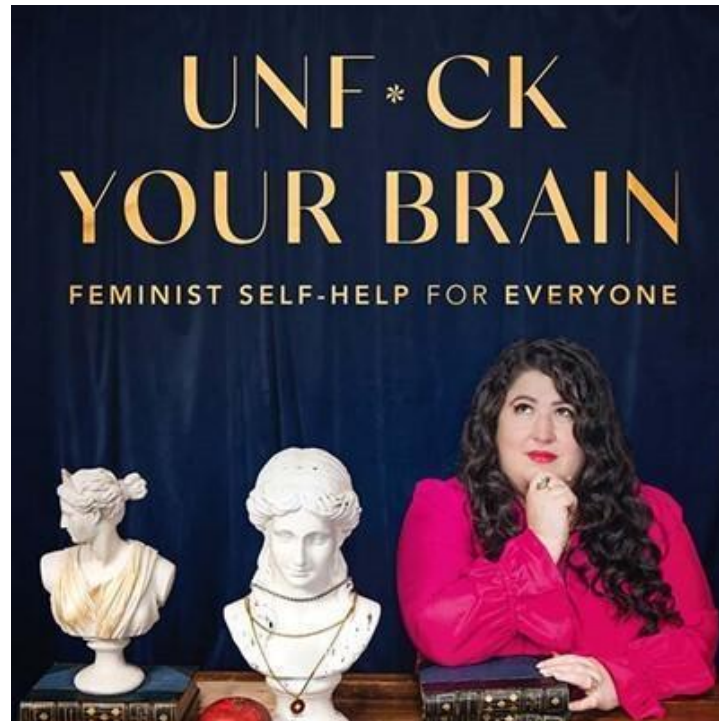


UFYB 493: Coaching Hotline: Making Friends as an Adult & The Line Between Honesty and People-Pleasing



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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UFYB 493: Coaching Hotline: Making Friends as an Adult & The Line Between Honesty and People-Pleasing

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.

Today, this is going to be a friendship-themed episode because I got two great questions about friendships that I want to answer today.

So, the first one is, "I know that I have a long way to go with my thought work about self-esteem, automatic negative thinking, but I also want to build friendships while still working on myself. Is it realistic to work on these things at the same time? Also, I grew up in an antisocial family, meaning friends were for school and only during school. And I believe this prevented me from making friends, which in turn left me with poor friendship skills. I'm 21. I live at home due to religious reasons and in grad school for social work, and I haven't made super close friends besides one who is super busy with schoolwork. How do I make friends in grad school and be okay with my parents or family being super critical angry?"

Okay, so this is actually a couple of questions. There's a question about making friends, and then there's a question about your family's reaction to you making friends. So, yes, it's totally fine to try to make friends at the same time that you're working on your thoughts about yourself. We don't have to live in a vacuum until we fix ourselves perfectly before we start to try to have human relationships. And sometimes we have to go out and

UFYB 493: Coaching Hotline: Making Friends as an Adult & The Line Between Honesty and People-Pleasing

engage with something in order to work on it. So if you want to build your thoughts about being someone who can have friendships, you're going to have to go try to make friendships to do that. It's like when people who are building a business want to get their thoughts perfect before they take action on their business. That's not how it works.

So, the thing for you to look at is that you have a lot of thoughts in here. For instance, you believe that your family is antisocial and that this prevented you from making friends. And then you believe you have poor friendship skills. So, those thoughts are not serving you and they're just going to create the result that you would expect, right? If your thought is, "I have poor friendship skills," and then how do you feel, probably anxious or sad, and then how do you act? You are constantly focusing on how you don't know how to make friends. You probably look around and look at everybody else making friends. You probably don't actually talk to people to make friends. You probably don't notice when somebody is trying to make friends with you because you're so convinced that you have bad friendship skills, and then what you end up with is you don't have friends, not because you have poor friendship skills, as if that's a real thing, but because your thought is that you have poor friendship skills.

So what I want you to consider is what if friendship skills is not a thing? You've made one close friend already. Obviously, you know how to do it. That's how I would think about it, but you're looking at it as because I already believe I have poor friendship skills, I ignore this evidence that I have made a friend, and I tell myself that I don't know how to do it. So the way you make friends in grad school is you believe you can make friends. And you look at the proof, which is that you already have made a friend. And you just build from there and you shift these thoughts about how it's your family's fault and you don't have good friend skills and you didn't make friends growing up. All of that story is keeping you stuck in this identity and in these thoughts, feelings, and actions.

UFYB 493: Coaching Hotline: Making Friends as an Adult & The Line Between Honesty and People-Pleasing

The second question about being okay with your parents or family being critical or angry, that's a whole different question. And that's going to require you to do a lot of thought work on letting other people be mad and not making it your problem. If you want to have a friend or have more than one friend and you want to spend time with friends, your family doesn't have to agree with you that's a good idea. You're allowed to do it anyway. So letting other people be wrong, letting other people be upset with us, letting other people disapprove of our choices is so freeing. We want to fight them for it, but if you truly embrace that it's okay to want to have friends and that you really want them, then you won't have to resist your family so much and be so concerned with their thought process about it. So those are two different things for you to work on.

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 review comes from J. Priest and the title is just, "Thank you."

"Kara has a way of communicating what my thoughts are that I can't put into words myself. Why was I doing that? Why do I take any responsibility for failed relationships? All of that and so much more. Thank you for explaining my brain. I absolutely love listening. I have spent so many years telling myself my picker is broke. This is echoed by so many in my life. I

UFYB 493: Coaching Hotline: Making Friends as an Adult & The Line Between Honesty and People-Pleasing

have spent 18 years discounting why my relationship works. Truth is, I spent time after my last failed marriage examining what I did wrong and what ways I needed to grow. I used this as a learning experience and that growth and continued growth put me in the position to create a successful marriage. Yes, he continues to pick me and he picked me to begin with, but I choose to grow to ensure my choice was right. I keep telling myself I'm not trustworthy when the truth is I just lack the self-confidence to trust my decisions. Kara always has a way of framing things in a way that helps me see my own growth."

Okay, second question. I really love this one because I think it's an interesting twist on it. So the question is, "A friend is slowly distancing herself from me after my being forward and making a suggestion she didn't ask for. I thought I did a good job explaining myself and apologizing, but she's still very distant two weeks later. She was very upset and said she felt judged and didn't feel like she could share with me anymore. I explained that wasn't my intention. I thought I was stating the obvious and being helpful. My opinions are never hidden and she has said in the past that she liked that about me.

"I'd like to not lose friends due to my forthright nature. My brother lashed out at me for having opinions at a family gathering for example, and I'd like to know what to do. Logically, I understand that there's no controlling others, but others do not manage their minds and they just stop talking to you. I've been grappling with the idea of keeping my opinions to myself to avoid defensiveness and ultimately losing friends, but I know that's people-pleasing at best. Thoughts?"

Okay, here's why I love this question, because it sounds like I should just say, "Well, you can't control other people and you need to be yourself." But that's not the most advanced way to coach yourself on this. Here's the question for you to consider. Why do you want to give people opinions that they didn't ask for? What's that about? Why are you doing that? This

UFYB 493: Coaching Hotline: Making Friends as an Adult & The Line Between Honesty and People-Pleasing

person, you say yourself, your friend did not ask you for a suggestion and you just volunteered it, right?

And then your brother's gotten upset that you just volunteer your opinions at a family gathering. Why do you feel the need to volunteer your opinions? It's like you have this idea that you volunteering unasked-for opinions and telling other people what they should do and what you think about them is just being honest, right? And yeah, maybe it is, but why are you doing that? That's what I would encourage you to dig into. Why do you feel the need to do that?

I think in general when people do this, they either have never really contemplated the idea that they don't have to share their opinion about everything, or they are invested in the other person agreeing with them or thinking that they're smart or seeing their point of view or accepting their suggestion. Ask yourself, what is it you want to think and feel when you are volunteering an opinion or advice that nobody asked you for? Obviously, I don't think that we should only speak when spoken to, but if this is coming up a lot for you, I think it's worth you digging into why are you doing this behavior? It's like you think keeping your opinions to yourself is people-pleasing. I'm not so sure that's true. It depends on what the opinion is and why. If you are not sharing your opinions about like what you want to do in your own life in order to please other people, that's people-pleasing.

But not sharing your opinion about somebody else that they haven't asked you for, that's not people-pleasing to keep that to yourself. Nobody's asked you, right? So the question is, why do you want to do that? So I really want you to think about that distinction. People-pleasing is when we don't tell people the truth about what we want to do, our own opinions for ourselves and our own lives. Like, "I don't want to go to that party," or, "I don't agree with that morally or politically," or, "I don't want to do that event," or, "I actually just want to go home," or, "I don't want to eat that," or, "I don't want to have sex right now," or whatever it is, it's like something that affects us,

UFYB 493: Coaching Hotline: Making Friends as an Adult & The Line Between Honesty and People-Pleasing

something that's in our business. It's our own business. Not sharing our opinions about our own business and what we want to do with our lives and how we think and feel about things that directly impact us in order to keep other people happy, that's people-pleasing.

Not sharing your opinion or judgment or advice about somebody else that they didn't ask for, that's not people-pleasing to keep that to yourself, right? So I want you to really think about that distinction and really dig into why are you doing this. In my experience, when I want to volunteer an opinion or advice that someone else hasn't asked for, it's because always, right, of my own thoughts. Either I'm thinking like, "Ugh, this is dumb, I can solve this. Just do this." Or I want them to think that I am smart, or I want them to think I have good advice, or I get some ego boost out of being the person who knows the answer or knows what to do. There's always something in it for me. So that's the question for you. What's in it for you? Why are you doing this? It doesn't sound like you're someone who just is not socially aware to even know that you're doing it. It seems pretty clear that you know you're doing it.

But you seem to take pride in this and think, "My opinions are never hidden and people, some people like that about me," and, "It would be people-pleasing to not tell people my opinions about them." But I don't think that's necessarily people-pleasing. So I really would encourage you to dig into why are you doing this. What are the thoughts that go through your mind when you decide to volunteer advice or an opinion that nobody's asked you for and see what's going on in there? That's going to be much more fruitful than setting up the question this way as if it's people-pleasing, when I don't really think that it is. That's it for this week. I'll talk to you next week.