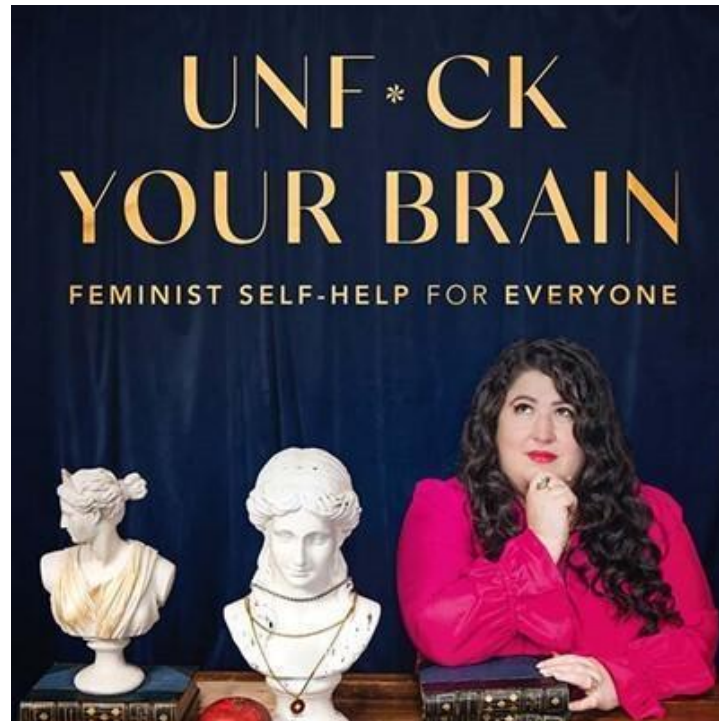


UFYB 495: Coaching Hotline: Stop Romanticizing the Future & Why We Chase People Who Don't Want Us



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.

The questions today both kind of have to do with fantasies in different ways, I think. So, we'll see what you think. I think they're related. All right, here we go.

So the first question is, "Hi Kara, I understand that because my thoughts cause my feelings, it doesn't get any better than this. And this is because thoughts that create amazing feelings are always available. Where I'm struggling is when I'm planning for my future, I get swept away by all the exciting possibilities and I romanticize my future life. I don't know how to find the balance between living and being present in my current life while also planning for my future self, without getting caught up in the idea that my future self will have a better experience. I think this is because when I think back to my past self, there are lots of ways that my current self, who's the future self from my past self, life seems better or easier than it did for my past self. For example, with thought work, my day-to-day life has become drastically less stressful than how I was living in the past. I also have more money than my past self and am able to try new experiences, so in those ways my future life has become better."

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So, this is such an interesting way of framing this question because these two examples that the asker gives me are actually completely different, but by conflating them, she's able to confuse herself, which is what all of our brains do. So, your life seems better now because your thoughts are different, which had nothing to do with a future like place you live or money you make or anything else. Your current thoughts right now are less stressful than some of your past thoughts. Although, I will say, that seems obvious to you and probably a lot of you experience this, and I also experience this, but I also know that I don't know for sure that that's what's happening.

It's possible, and I do think there are some thoughts I no longer have, but what you can't forget is that a lot of the work that we do is not just changing thoughts, it's increasing your distress tolerance, right? Meaning how much you're able to experience negative thoughts and negative emotions without becoming kind of emotionally undone. And so I actually don't know that it's so clear that your life is less stressful because now you think different thoughts. I think that probably is part of it. But you still have plenty of negative thoughts and feelings sometimes, but you just don't get as upset about them.

So we also have to just make sure that we see that even in that way our brain kind of lies to us and it's like, "Oh, the circumstance of you having less bad thoughts is what feels better." It's like, "Well, maybe partly, but maybe also when I have negative thoughts and feelings, I just don't make them such a big deal." And so maybe my like quote unquote circumstance of how many thoughts and feelings I'm having hasn't changed as much as I think it has. It's more my thought about them that has changed. It's very meta, right?

But however you want to think about the thoughts part, then you have the second sentence, "Well, I have more money, I'm able to have new experiences and so my life has become better." That's 100% incorrect,

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right? Money doesn't make your life better and new experiences don't make your life better. Your thoughts about them do. So your life is not better now because you have more money or you've had different experiences. Plenty of people make more money and become unhappy. Plenty of people have lots of new experiences they don't want to have. Or they make money and go on vacation and are miserable on their vacations.

So, those are two totally different things, and I think by conflating them, that's why you're able to confuse yourself that maybe in the future things will just be better. But that's not the case. It's always your own brain. So, in another way to think about this is like, to the extent if your experience is just created by your brain and how happy you can feel and how good you can think your life is is just your own thoughts, there's nothing in the future that makes those thoughts more true or easier than they are now. There is no changing of the circumstance that is going to change that. It's like practice will sometimes make you better at thinking those thoughts. That's all internal. There is no external circumstance that's going to be different in the future.

So when you romanticize your future life, here's the thing, you're just romanticizing your future thoughts and feelings you want to have. That's it. And I think that you sort of misphrase the question to yourself in a way when you say, "I don't know how to find the balance between living and being present in my current life while also planning for my future self without romanticizing it." But what if that's not true? What if that isn't actually confusing or conflicting? If you just decided that the future was always going to feel the way it does now, then there'd be nothing to be confused about. Like the only reason you're getting confused is that you want to hold on to the idea that in the future things will be better. So you're sort of like, "Well, how do I keep believing that in the future things will be better without believing it so much that I go into like fantasy?" And it's like not the right question.

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The question is, if life is 50/50, again, not an exact scientific percentage, but I'm going to have negative and positive thoughts and feelings now or in the future, what do I want to do? Like when I'm planning, it's because I want to like accomplish a goal or set my calendar or like book flights or you know, whatever. I'm like planning for logistics. I'm not planning for how will I get myself to this thought and feeling. That's what thought work is for, and I might be working on that now.

But you have to remember that what you enjoy is always just your own thoughts and feelings. Like that's why the journey is always better than the destination, because the journey is where you learn how to think and feel in a new way and by the time you get to the destination, it's already, it's like old hat. You've already gotten there, right? Making a million dollars in my business was not that exciting. The part where I was at like 600k and I started to see and believe on a new level, like it became a certainty. I was already working on believing it, obviously that's how I got there. But the point at which it was like a certainty, like, oh, that money's in the bank. Like, that's done. I know that's going to happen. That's when it was exciting. Once I actually got there, my brain was already on the next thing. It's never the circumstance. It's your thoughts and feelings about it.

So when you're romanticizing the future, you just have to ask yourself, "What is it you expect you will think and feel in this future?" That's what you want to think and feel now. And if what you're hoping to think and feel is life is perfect and I never have any negative emotion, then it's totally a fantasy. But don't tell yourself that has anything to do with planning. There's no relationship between those two things. You can plan your for your future and plan your life without it having anything to do with your fantasies about how you might think and feel in the future.

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

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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 Caffeinated Mom 83, and I love this review specifically because so often I see people saying that coaching or thought work isn't neurodivergent friendly and I think that's such a misconception. I am neurodivergent, so are a lot of coaches and clients I know, and here is a podcast review from a neurodivergent listener. It's from Caffeinated Mom 83, great name. And the title is "Most Helpful Resource I Found in Years. This podcast has helped me so much. I'm autistic and have always struggled with understanding people and situations, which causes a huge amount of anxiety. Listening to Kara, I've learned so many tricks for managing my thoughts and have really reduced how much time I was fixating on how I might be perceived. It's done wonders for my ability to grow professionally."

So here's the second question. This is why I think they're kind of related. This question is, "Why is it that we sometimes want what we can't have? More specifically, why do we chase those who clearly aren't interested in us? The fellow I was obsessing over recently just told me that he stopped feeling any real physical desire for me two weeks ago. So obviously we ended things. When reflecting, I realized that I felt these overwhelming feelings of compulsion to check my phone for his texts for a while. I had zero control and the more I made myself available, the more he pulled away. How do I change my thoughts around this? How do I stop desiring

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someone who's clearly uninterested in me? I just desperately want to never lose control like this again. Please help."

Okay, so what this question shares is the fantasy that there's a future where you won't have to have negative emotion or feel rejection. This thought, "I'm desperately want to never lose control like this again," right? The minute that you are desperate to not have a certain mental or emotional experience is the minute that you become a prisoner to it. That's the thing, y'all. When you are trying to reject something or get away from it, you think you're going to exercise control over it, but all it means is you've given all of your control over to it. It is controlling you because you are basing everything around trying not to experience it or trying to get away from it. If you desperately want to never lose control, you have already lost control.

The reason you think you don't feel in control because you were checking your phone too much. You don't feel in control because your thought is, "I desperately need to make sure I never lose control again." Then you automatically don't feel in control now. You want this fantasy self where you would never ever do something like that or feel that way. And I'm not saying you can't become someone through your thought work who doesn't get as obsessed with people who aren't interested in them or you can learn not to check your phone so much. That's like a dopamine driven urge loop, habit cycle that you can change. But the minute that you're having this like, "I just never want to feel this way again, I never want to be this person," you're already completely out of control in your thoughts and your feelings.

So, the reason that you are or were obsessed with getting validation from this guy is the same reason that most of us get obsessed with getting validation, which is that we don't love ourselves, so we want validation from outside of us. And that's so inherent in the way you phrase your question, right? You're like, "How do I stop doing this? I desperately want to be different." You're like, "I'm rejecting myself. I desperately want to be

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different." And then you want, you're wondering why you care so much what someone else thinks because you're rejecting yourself. You're telling yourself that the way you are is unacceptable and you have to be different. So if you're telling yourself that you're terrible, then of course you care so much about validation from other people.

And then I think there's a third thing buried in here, which is that you think that you drove him away by being too available, and so it's like you want to learn how to not want someone so that they'll want you more, which is like a completely losing game. Whatever happened with his thoughts and feelings and sexual arousal has nothing to do with you. It's his own thoughts and his own feelings. It's not because you made yourself more available. It's certainly not because you checked your phone, which he wouldn't even know about.

So you have like a lot of kind of magical fantasy thinking going on in here in the sense that you want to be able to reject yourself in the way you are now and to be a person who has like 100% perfect control, and then you think that's going to change how other people think and feel about you also. And of course, the opposite is true. Right now, the reason you feel out of control is that you're telling yourself that you don't have control and that that's terrible and that it drives other people away. But that's you driving yourself away and rejecting yourself. What if you are a person who had some thoughts and feelings about this dude and checked your phone a lot and that's totally okay? It is part of the human experience. Most of us have felt out of control about checking our phones for somebody to text us. Like that's part of the human experience and it doesn't mean anything has gone wrong. You have to accept it before you can possibly change it. That's it for this week. I'll talk to you next week.