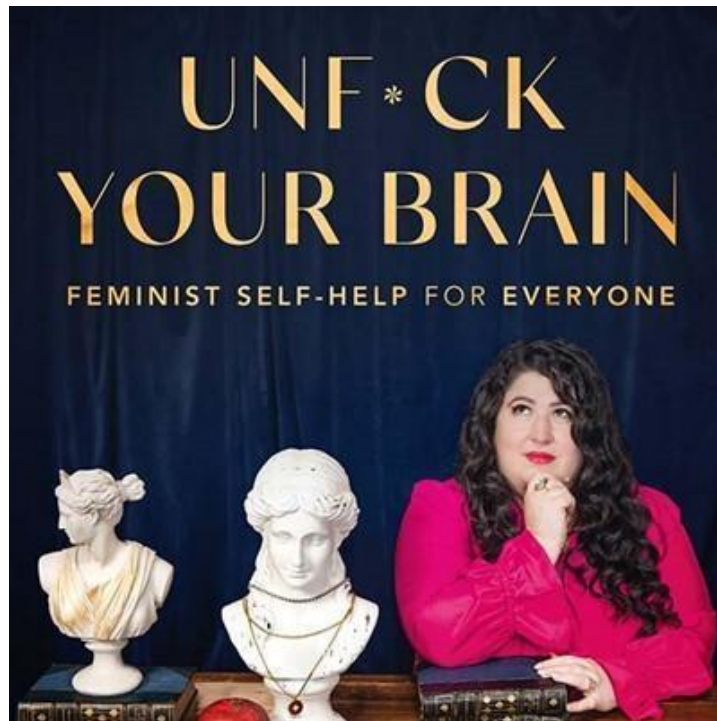


UFYB 515: Coaching Hotline: What If "Good Enough" Makes Me Worse?



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.

Here's our listener question. "I'm grappling with the idea of choosing thoughts that are useful rather than necessarily true. I'm a perfectionist, and I worry that if I think whatever I do is enough, my work quality will actually suffer. How do I let myself off the hook without lowering the bar?"

This is such a common question that I get from perfectionists all the time, my previous self included. And whenever we have a question that's basically, if I don't beat myself up, I won't do a good job, what we're actually saying is something really deep about how we think human nature works. And this is why I say that coaching is really practical philosophy because this is a philosophical question. What do you think humans are? Do you think humans are animals or organisms that are inherently lazy, sloppy, not motivated, and need to be shamed and abused and motivated with criticism in order to perform well? That is one way of thinking about what humans are.

Or do you believe that humans are a being, an animal, or whatever, an organism that is inherently creative and curious and wants to do things in the world and produce things and cares about what they're doing? This debate goes all the way back to Rousseau and Locke, right? This is a long-

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standing philosophical debate about what is the nature of being a human. And are we inherently good or bad? Or in this case, am I inherently going to be motivated to do high-quality work, or do I really need to be abusing myself in order to get that out of me?

You have to decide what you want to think, but I would suggest to you that when you look at little kids, you don't really see them lying on the couch, not interested in doing anything. They don't have that same self-critical thinking yet. And they are curious and creative, and they want to work on projects with each other, and they want to create things, they want to learn things, they want to be a participant in creating, cooperating, serving, all of it. And that's what I believe is our essential nature. So, if we are motivating ourselves with criticism or abuse, we need to think about why we're doing that. And when you think that if you lower the bar, quote-unquote, and don't beat yourself up and don't criticize yourself that your work is going to suffer, just really be conscious of what you're telling yourself about who you are as a person. And is that really the belief that you want to hold?

And I'll just give you the example of my own life because I had this belief, and with that belief, I did have an accomplished legal career. I criticized and abused myself all the way through Harvard Law School and clerking on a federal appeals court and getting litigation fellowships and academic fellowships and running a think tank at Columbia. It worked in that way.

But what I was able to do when I stopped doing that was find a career I really loved, create a business I never thought I could, make more money than I ever thought I could, do work that's meaningful to me with a lifestyle that I want, on my own terms, with freedom, helping literally thousands, hundreds of thousands of women around the world between my podcast, my book, my coaching. So, it's not that self-criticism doesn't, quote-unquote, work in a short-term limited way, but for me, I was able to achieve way, way more when I stopped doing that to myself. So I want you to contemplate the possibility that could be true for you as well.