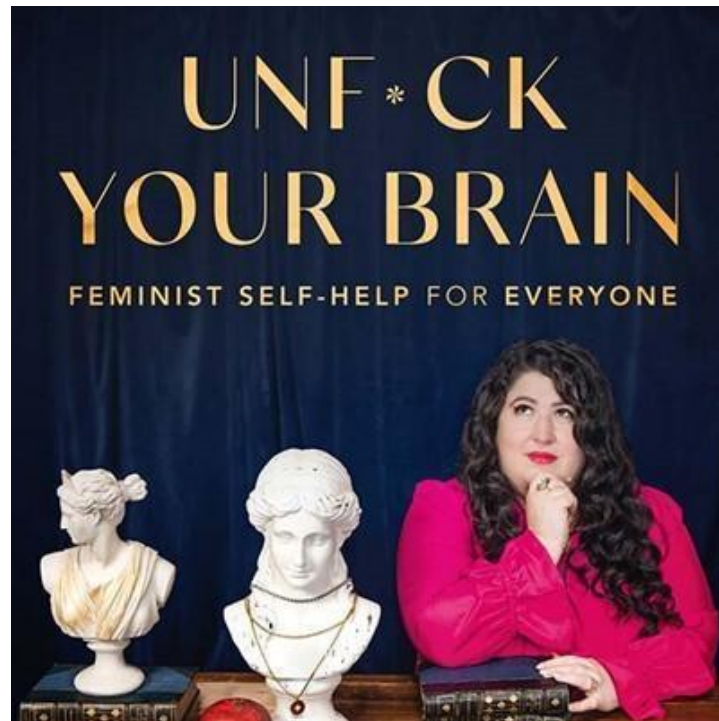


UFYB 517: Coaching Hotline: Isn't Yelling at My Kids Messing Them Up?



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 question for this week. "I'm stuck in a loop where I yell at my kids and then judge myself for it. I know I need to work on the judgment first, but I just can't accept the yelling as neutral. I feel like I'm damaging them and that makes me feel like a terrible person. How do I start here?"

This is such a great question and I think so many of us can identify with this. And even if we don't have kids, we might have the same thoughts about snapping at a partner or being harsh in feedback to somebody at work, right? Anything where we understand that shaming and judging ourselves is getting in the way, and yet we're really attached to the idea that what we're doing is bad and harmful. And so we get caught in this paradox where we know that accepting ourselves would make it better long term, but we are sort of scared or unwilling or unable to accept ourselves because we think we are doing something harmful and damaging.

So, here's the bad news. I can't convince you that yelling at your children might not have some negative effect. Now, do I think that in a lifetime of parenting, if you are mostly connected to and attentive to and attuned to your kids, the occasional yell is not going to damage them long term? I 100% believe that. Humans are very resilient, right? And there's plenty of

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research showing that what really matters in parenting is the overall flavor of that relationship over time. The occasional losing of your temper is a very normal human thing that it really is not going to impact your attachment or your children's emotional stability or future.

That being said, of course, then your brain is just going to be like, well, how often is too often, right? If we try to sort of convince ourselves that there's no negative impact whatsoever of what we're doing, we're just going to be stuck. And so what you actually have to accept is that this is just a thing that's happening right now. You think of it as this negative thing and that you need to get rid of it, but you're holding yourself to a standard of parenting that you are not able to and don't have the skills right now to rise to.

You're not yelling at your kids because you're a bad person. That's what your brain tells you. You yell because you're a bad parent. But that's not true. You yell because you don't have the emotional regulation skills built yet to deal with the stimulus of whatever they're doing without yelling. It's just a skills gap.

So the first way we can start to de-shame this is to separate out this belief that it might be negative for them and then the belief that you're a terrible person. I think it'll be easier to start with the idea that you're not a terrible person, you just have a gap in your skills. That is going to make you much more able to try to actually address the behavior and learn those skills. Because when we shame ourselves, we're not able to learn skills because we don't want to accept that it might take some work, it might take some time, right? We want to miraculously and magically become a different person overnight so that we don't have to feel bad.

So that's number one, is accepting that you are not a terrible person. That's a totally optional interpretation. You just have a skill gap. You're not able to

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deal with whatever's happening without yelling, you don't have that emotional regulation tool.

The second piece, and this is the part that I think is harder but really liberating, is to accept that all parents fuck up their kids a little bit. Now, that's obviously also an optional thought in terms of what do we think it means to fuck someone up or not, right? But there is no parent who is able to parent without doing something that their kid experiences as negative. Now, that doesn't mean that we should just not care if we don't feed our children and scream at them and lock them in the basement. Of course, that's not what's actually going on here, right? It may be that when you yell, your kids are having a negative experience. It may even be that impacts them negatively.

There are many things you're doing that also impact them positively. And regardless of kind of the moralizing parent paranoia or witch hunt that goes on in online parenting spaces these days, you're actually just a human being. So are your kids, but so are you. So of course we want to try to be responsible guides and caretakers for the people in our life that we take care of and are responsible for, but there's no way to do it perfectly.

There's no way to get through parenting, which is a thousand moments together every day for at least 18 years, without doing some stuff that's amazing for your kids and some stuff that isn't. That is just the nature of being a parent. And if we can accept that, paradoxically, it actually frees us up to become much better parents. We're always afraid to accept that we can't be perfect because we think that means we will take that as an excuse to be shitty. But that's not what happens. When we accept that we can't be perfect, we take down the stakes and we take down the shame and the activation that we're experiencing, and then we actually are much better parents.

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If you accept the idea that occasionally you may lose your temper and yell at your kids and that even if that isn't great for them, you're doing a lot of other things well as a parent and that is not going to be the worst thing in the world for your relationship with them, it's not going to ruin them. Like when you are able to take down the perfectionism, you won't be as activated all the time and you're actually going to yell less because you're going to be more relaxed, right? And you'll be able to build those emotional regulation skills.

So we have to accept that you're not a terrible person, there's just a skill gap. That's number one. And number two, there's no such thing as a parent who doesn't fuck up their kids a little bit. I'm using that kind of its strong language intentionally. You can call it whatever you want, but like there is no perfect parent. And the truth is some of the things we think we're doing because we think they're like the height of what's recommended for parenting end up long term to maybe be negative for our kids. And some shit that we maybe felt bad about turns out to be positive for them.

We're not omniscient. We don't know. All we can do is try to show up and do our best, but we don't do our best when we are telling ourselves that we're terrible people who are damaging our children. So if you want to do your best, you have to regulate yourself first.