

## UFYB 58: FOMO



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

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## UFYB 58: FOMO

Welcome to *Unf\*ck Your Brain*, the only podcast that teaches you how to use psychology, feminism, and coaching, to rewire your brain and get what you want in life. And now here's your host, Harvard law school grad, feminist rockstar, and master coach, Kara Loewentheil.

Hello my chickens, how are you guys today? So first of all, before we get going, I want to thank you to everyone who did go leave a rating or review in iTunes. I so appreciate that as do all the women who can find the podcast now.

We are not yet at my goal of 500 reviews, but we're about halfway there. So if you already did this, gold star for you. If you haven't, go do it. Go rate and review on iTunes. If you're not on iTunes, awesome if you do it too, but iTunes is the place that we're having this keyword issue.

The other thing you can do to help the process is subscribe to the podcast and download the episodes. So I think some of you just like, check back every week, which is awesome, but it's actually easier for you if you subscribe, and if you download or subscribe, that helps boost it too. And for those of you who are like, why is she telling us what to do about this, in the last episode, I talked about how iTunes has changed its rules and podcasters can't put keywords in the searchable field anymore, and that means that people can't find it.

It's like, whatever you searched to find the podcast, now if somebody searches that, they're not going to find the podcast unless it is like, high enough up in the rankings basically. So subscribing, downloading, rating, reviewing, those are all the keys to getting the podcast more visible so that more women can find out that they are not alone and they're not crazy.

Just remember how you felt before you first heard the podcast and before you learned that your thoughts create your feelings and that there's a reason that you are this way, and just think about all the women and people

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of any gender identity who still feel that way and just have no idea that they're not crazy and they aren't broken. They need the podcast. That's why we do this.

So help them out. Go rate, review, download, subscribe. I will stop asking when I get to 500 reviews, at least for a while. So if you have a friend who hasn't done it and you want me to stop talking about it, text her, get her going. It's like, the match for public radio fundraising.

Okay, so I have another thing I want to tell you guys about, but this is a coaching thing before I get to FOMO. So don't worry, we're getting there. Don't have FOMO about the FOMO on this episode. But right before I was getting ready to record this episode, I had this brain like, moment that I think would be really useful to share with you guys so I'm going to do that.

So I got this really sweet thank you note from a client in the mail. It was all about how *Unf\*ck Your Brain* had changed her life and thanking me for helping her. And I get a lot of notes like this and actually from people who listen to the podcast too, and of course, I love reading them. It's so sweet, but I also know that it's not really me who did it.

It's always the person who wrote the note who changed their own life. It's like this client of mine, she's giving me credit for something she did. Like, if you build a house with your bare hands, the guys - the people at Lowes who sold you the lumber and the videos on YouTube that taught you how, they shouldn't get the credit. They were helpful and, in some sense, they were maybe even indispensable in that you couldn't have done it without it. You needed the lumber, you needed the teaching videos, without those, without YouTube and Lowes, you wouldn't have built the house.

But they still didn't actually create the house. You did. So this is like, a little bit of a tangent but it's just so important to remember because even those of you who write me emails about how the podcast has changed your life,

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you changed your life. A lot of people listen to the podcast and it's just like, in one ear and out the other, which is fine. Of course, if this just amuses you to listen to on your way to work, I'm happy to have you hear, and you'll learn - you will learn some stuff by osmosis.

But if the podcast has changed your life, that's because you did some work. That's because you listened several times or even took notes on what I was teaching and you practiced it. You're the one who did that. The podcast taught you some tools and I am so glad to have shared them with you, and of course I love hearing your stories because my mission is to teach this work to every woman in the world - small achievable goal - but you are more powerful than you're giving yourself credit for.

If you have seen a change from listening to the podcast or if you're a client, just worked with me of course, like, you did that. I might have been indispensable in the sense that you needed what I taught you and you needed my help in seeing the blind spots where you couldn't coach yourself, like I'm not saying I did nothing, but I could coach myself blue in the face and if you weren't doing the work and making the change, nothing would happen.

So it's so important to give yourself that credit and I see women do this in particular where we're socialized to be really differential to authority and not to take credit for our own accomplishments, and that happens even in this space with my clients or my listeners. So I just want you to know and to see that you did the work, you're the one who changed your life. You are so much stronger and more capable of transformation than you think, and it really has nothing to do with me. I'm just the conduit. I might be an important conduit, but I'm still - I'm not the one doing the work.

Okay, so got this note from my clients. It was very sweet, I read it. Now, here's the thing about this that I want to teach you. I also want to teach you that thing I just taught you, but I have another thing I want to teach you. So

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I happen to know this client is doing a technique that she got from a friend of mine who's a great coach. Her name is Susan Hyatt.

It's called 3-2-1. So basically, the idea is when - if you're trying to build a business like without online ads or just kind of by networking and word of mouth, every day you send three emails, you write two thank you notes, and you talk to one person. You're not selling in these. It's not like three emails asking people to buy. You're just making contact and sharing info about what you're up to.

So this client's doing three, two, one, and I know she's doing three, two, one because I taught her to do it. I taught her the concept and told her to do it. So here's the part that I want to share with you guys. My first thought was, how sweet, like, she's doing amazing, I'm so glad Unf\*ck Your Brain changed her life, I'm so proud of her. This is what I live for is knowing - seeing how this work helps women change their lives.

And then the gremlin who lives in the back of my brain like, stirred in his little bower back there and raised his little warty head and said, "You know, she'll only write that because she's doing 3-2-1 and she needed someone to thank." So this is the part I think so many of you can relate to. Someone gives you a compliment and you immediately discount it because you come up with some other reason they might have said it.

And in fact, a lot of you, a lot of us go fishing for a compliment. We like, want to get the compliment and we ask leading questions to get the compliment and then we reject the compliment because we fished for it, which is totally bananas. You like, successfully manipulate someone into saying something nice to you and then you're like, "Well, that doesn't count. I had to manipulate them into doing it."

Which like, in that case why do we do that in the first place, right? So I think what most of us try to do in this kind of situation is we try to like, we're like,

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alright, well, I'll try to like, argue myself out of this other motivation and try to just believe it was a pure compliment. That's not that affective usually, right?

So here's what I want to propose you think about. What if both are true? Like, what if she wrote me the note because she's doing 3-2-1, that's like, the whole reason she would write a note, and because she genuinely thinks the program changed her life? She could have written a note to someone else. Like, she picked me.

What if your husband or your wife or your partner tells you that you are pretty because they love you and they want you to feel good about yourself and because they genuinely think you're pretty? What if your team leader tells you that you did a good job on the presentation both because they're trying to be more positive in their feedback for team morale and because they really think you did great?

I think we often think it's one or the other. One drop of any other reason totally negates the positive intent of a compliment or a thank you, or any kind of affirmation or praise. Like, it only counts if the person has no reason to tell us that. But that doesn't make any sense, right?

What if it only counted as a genuine compliment if a total stranger told you that you're pretty or smart? Like, number one, that'd be weird. No one wants strangers complimenting them on the street. We usually call that harassment. And number two, you would still believe that they wanted something from you. You can never convince yourself that someone has 100% pure motives for complimenting you because you're not psychic. You can't like, affirm that or figure that out.

So what if you just allowed people to have multiple motives? It's like replacing the "or" in their motivation with "and." What if they want you to feel good, or they're trying to be nice and they also believe the nice thing

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they said? I just think that's a game changer for allowing your brain to accept positive thoughts that other people offer you.

And yes, of course, I do teach that other people don't cause your feelings and that we don't want to rely on external validation, but when you are not used to allowing yourself to think anything positive about you, borrowing the thoughts other people give you can sometimes be helpful and just in terms of your interpersonal relationship with them, not being so kind of suspicious and dismissive of the nice things they do say to you is going to make it better.

You feel worse about them when you're thinking about how they don't really mean the compliment. Whereas if you can accept it, then you get to feel loving and warm because you can be thinking that they really mean this thing they said about you. It's like, a much more kind of generous and receptive state to be in.

Okay, so we're 10 minutes into this podcast and now I'm ready to get to today's topic and that is FOMO, which is fear of missing out, for those of you who were not raised by wolves and internet chat rooms. Yes, my children, that is what came before Instagram. Internet chat rooms are where internet slang was originally born.

So a lot of people suffer from FOMO, which is the fear of missing out, and I think it's fascinating personally because I mostly suffer from the fear of not being allowed to go home when I want and miss out on whatever I want to miss out on. But that's because I'm a, what Joan Didion calls "a gregarious recluse." I need a lot of alone time.

Anyway, people call FOMO a feeling, but I don't think it is a feeling. I think it's a thought or a set of thoughts. FOMO is thinking about how if you were doing something else that you're not doing, you'd be happier than you are now. And those thoughts I think produce anxiety. We call it fear of missing

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out. Anxiety is like, a subset of fear. So if we're going to assign FOMO a feeling, I think it's mostly anxiety. But I think it's more accurate to say FOMO is the name for a set of thoughts that create anxiety.

Now, we might think this is kind of a light concept for a podcast, but I'm doing an episode about it because I actually think FOMO is a perfect lens into how the brain works and how we ruin our own time with our own thoughts. When you have FOMO, you're essentially thinking about how if you were doing something other than what you're doing right now, you'd be happier.

Or if it's future-focused, it's thinking about how if you don't do something in the future, you'll miss out on future happiness. So you're afraid that you're going to miss out, but on what? You're really just afraid of missing out on happiness, either now or in the future, and you think that if you're doing a different activity or you're in a different location or with different people, you'd feel better than you do now.

The irony of course, all together now, is that your thoughts create your feelings. So what you're doing is ruining your current moment when you're thinking about FOMO with your thoughts. And then you think the way to fix the current moment where your thoughts are making you anxious is to change your location or activity, either now or in the future.

So let's say that again. Right now when you feel bad, you're ruining your current moment with your thoughts about FOMO. And then you think the way to fix that is to change your location or activity now or to decide you'll change it in the future.

But the truth is there's no such thing as missing out. That's a thought. Whether or not a group of other people are in any particular location doing any particular thing has no bearing on how you feel. What creates your feelings are your thoughts about that and what creates their feelings are

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their thoughts about it. Right now, there is someone you envy, doing something you wish you could be doing, who is having a horrible time being them and doing that thing because of their thoughts about it.

This is so powerful when you really internalize this, you guys. Whatever you think you want, like, oh, if I was just a supermodel on honeymoon with my wealthy, handsome, fabulous husband, I would be having the best time ever. You know what, there's a supermodel on her honeymoon with her wealthy, handsome husband who is crying in her room because somebody looked at her the wrong way or she ate too many calories or she got dropped from the next Paris runway show or whatever it is.

A lot of my clients who struggle with FOMO have a very hard time accepting the premise that our thoughts cause our feelings, even when it comes to fun. They think that other people and activities deliver the fun. And they somehow think fun is not a feeling. And I think that's because fun is a really general, vague concept, so they just think, "Oh, well I don't sit around thinking I'm having fun so fun must be delivered by other people."

But it's not. Fun doesn't mean anything in and of itself. It only means something once it's applied by a particular person's brain to a particular activity. People can really disagree about what is fun, right? Some people think mountain climbing is fun, and some people think book clubs are fun, and some people think debating is fun, and some people think macramé is fun.

Some people have the most fun on their own, and then some people have the most fun with a small group of friends, and some people have the most fun in a giant group of strangers. And some people find some of those fun some of the time and not others of the time, or depending on the people.

What accounts for that is that we all have different thoughts about what is fun. Now, our thought might be, "This is fun," it might also just be like, "I

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enjoy this. These people are interesting." It's not always literally, "This is fun," although a lot of times it is. If you decide something's fun, then it's fun. If you decide that it's not fun then it's not fun.

And if you're convinced that certain activities or people are fun, I want you to ask yourself this; have you ever been with those people or doing that activity and not had fun? Of course. Everyone has had an "off day," even doing something they love. You know why it was off? Because of your thoughts.

So if you normally would have been thinking, "I love these people and mountain biking is awesome and I feel so strong," the day that you had a terrible time you were thinking, "Ugh, why is Sam so slow and why is it so muddy today? This sucks, I'm freezing." Same activity, same people, your thoughts were different.

Conversely, most of us have also had fun doing something that we normally wouldn't think was fun. Because our thoughts are different that day. Rather than thinking this is boring and it sucks, you're thinking, "Oh, this is kind of fun," or, "I'm so glad I met Sam, he's super interesting," or something else about what you're doing or the people.

When you have FOMO and you indulge in those thoughts, you are denying yourself the possibility of having the feelings that you want. Your thoughts about how you would feel better if you were doing something else are actually your only problem in that moment. Let's say that again. Your thoughts about FOMO are actually the only thing making you upset.

Those are the thoughts that are causing the not having fun or the not feeling happy right now. The thought of FOMO is the only thing making you unhappy when you have FOMO. But you believe that it's not the thought, that it's actually that you need to change the activity or who you're around, now or in the future.

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But all you actually have to do is change the thought that is creating FOMO in the first place. Because if you didn't have FOMO, you'd be happy where you are doing what you're doing, which is the feeling that you think you're missing out on. You're like, I want to be happy where I am doing what I'm doing, so let me change where I am and what I'm doing. I don't want to miss out on that feeling of happiness.

But the thing that's making you miss out on it is your thought that you're missing out on it. It's meta, you guys. Because here is the bottom line, none of us can do everything. We can't master all trades. We can't try every activity. We can't travel to every place. Being alive is fundamentally a series of tradeoffs and opportunity costs.

Becoming a life coach means I'm not going to be a Supreme Court Justice. Going to Paris means you don't go to Prague. Marrying one person means you don't marry another. Living in Tokyo means you aren't living in Seoul. You can change things up to do more rather than less, but ultimately, there is more in the world that you could ever do or be, and that is beautiful.

It means there's enough to go around and that there's interesting conversations to have with people whose lives are different than yours. But we create FOMO and scarcity and anxiety when we believe we'd be happier doing something other than what we're doing now. Your thoughts create your feelings. Your happiness is caused by your mind.

You don't need to go to that party or take that trip or date that person just to feel differently. The irony I find is that often we're creating FOMO. We've made the choice we've made for a reason. We feel tired and so we want to stay in and get some rest. But then we torment ourselves with thoughts about how we might be missing out on a fun evening out, which means we get neither the fun nor the rest.

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You don't need to change your circumstance or your activity to cure FOMO. All you need to do is manage your mind. So here's a three-step process you can use when you are feeling FOMO.

Number one, ask yourself what the FOMO is about. What do you fear you're missing out on feeling?

Number two, notice how your thoughts are creating the opposite of that feeling for you right now.

Number three, ask yourself what you can think to feel the way that you are worried you won't feel right where you are. Like, how can you have fun where you are? How can you be happy where you are? How can you feel content where you are? What thoughts do you have to think to produce those feelings?

Alright my chickens, have a lovely week. Enjoy your coop. Stop having FOMO about what the other chickens are doing outside or vice versa. I'll talk to you next week.

Thanks for tuning in. If you want to start building your confidence right away, you can download a free confidence cheat sheet at [www.karaloewentheil.com/podcastconfidence](http://www.karaloewentheil.com/podcastconfidence).