

UFYB 73: Starting with Action + Giveaway of Feel Better and Get Sh*t Done



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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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. So, here's what we're going to do today. This episode is going to be short and to the point because everybody needs a little - not a smack. A smack would be aggressive, but everybody needs a little redirection about something. I'm feisty today.

Okay, so I was going to do a listener Q&A episode today. I was going through - I get so many questions - I was going through all these questions, figuring out what would be the most useful to address and what's the most common. And of course, what I realized is that there's actually a theme that runs through so many of these questions, and that the best thing I could do for this particular episode is address this theme, rather than talk it through every single different question.

So I am going to use a little bit of some of the questions I've gotten, just as examples, but what I'm going to do is teach you guys the biggest place you're going wrong in your thought work, probably, at least one of them. So that's what I'm going to do about one of the themes, and then - I know I'm being a little vague because if I start to explain it then I'm just going to be teaching you, which I'm about to do in a minute.

But before I do that - I don't have notes for this podcast. Can you tell? Before I do that, I also want to tell you the second thing that I get so many, so many questions about is people just wanting some kind of structure for doing thought work or being more productive or just I feel like a lot of you seem to feel like you're just kind of spinning throughout your days and you just need something to hold onto to help you get anchored and have some kind of thought work process.

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So teaching you how to coach yourself is a much bigger endeavor. I can't do that on the podcast, but because I love you and I want to stop getting emails about it, I designed a workbook called Feel Better and Get Shit Done. Very to the point, and this shit is free because that's how much I love you. That's how much I like to over-deliver.

So the workbook is called Feel Better and Get Shit Done and you can get it the same way we did the reading list and the skepticals worksheets, which is that you can text me. So here's how you get the Feel Better and Get Shit Done workbook. You text 347-997-1784.

So text your email to 347-997-1784 and again, if you didn't hear the previous episodes, you want to do all lowercase, and if you're already on my email list, you want to use the same email, otherwise you're going to get everything twice and then either you're going to get annoyed or you're going to unsubscribe and then my email server will think I'm spamming you.

So if you're already on my list, use that same email. 347-997-1784. Text us your email, and then you're going to get a response that asks you for the secret code or password or whatever term it uses, whatever term the robot uses, and then you're just going to text "feelbetter," all one word. So text your email to 347-997-1784, and then when it asks you for the code, you just text feelbetter, all one word.

So that should give you a good kind of very simplified basic place to hang your hat. It gives you a small thing to do in the morning, one thing to do during the day, and a small thing to do in the evening. It'll help you get set up for your day, make sure that you actually get something done during your day, and then close out your day.

Okay, so that was the hug part of this episode. Now, here comes the tough love part of this episode. It's not really tough love - I mean, it is a little bit.

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So, here's what I get a ton of questions about. This is the format. It's a long, detailed explanation about your particular situation and how it's so different, and then it's asking me what to do.

And often, it takes the form of like, when is it appropriate to do x, y, z, how do I know when it's time to do x, y, z, when should I do x, y, z? Here is the problem with framing it that way. It's never about what you should do. So one of the things I think people really misunderstand about life coaching is that I never tell people what to do. Almost never.

I really don't give my clients advice about how they should handle different situations, and here's why; because your thoughts and feelings determine your actions. So for me to try to tell you what to do would be like me saying why don't you try to force yourself to do this action without getting your thought and feeling cleared up and in line yet.

That's actually why I think most forms of life coaching don't work is that they just try to tell you to change the action and the whole point of the work that I do is that your thoughts and feelings drive your actions. So if someone just tells you to change your action, you usually won't do it, or you will white-knuckle through it and it'll feel exactly the same.

The example I always give is like, people don't need a career coach to tell them hey, you should be networking and sending cover letters. Like, most people can figure that out for themselves. The whole problem is that they're not doing it because they have some thought and feeling that they're not aware of and don't understand and so they're turning on Netflix and watching eight hours of Netflix instead of working on their cover letters. And they're drinking at home instead of going to the networking event.

The whole point is that in that hypothetical person, their thoughts and feelings are causing insecurity or anxiety or avoidance and they're not

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doing the thing. So me telling them to do the thing makes absolutely no difference. Worst case scenario, they just do exactly what they're doing now and best-case scenario, which isn't even really a best-case scenario, they kind of white-knuckle through doing what I said and then they're like, confused about why they don't feel any differently on the other side because they did what the coach said.

But of course, they don't feel any different because I haven't helped them change their thought and feeling. I've just told them what to do and even if they manage to kind of force themselves to do it, they're going to have the same thoughts and feelings before and after because they didn't change them.

So, the question is never what action should I take. Whenever one of my clients asks me, "What should I do?" I know that they're not clear in their thinking because when you have cleared up your thinking, when you are truly seeing circumstances for what they are, as neutral, and not believing all your own thoughts and you have gotten to a place of acceptance and love, whether it's for yourself or the other person or just not resisting reality anymore, when you've stopped believing your own stories about how there's a problem, the solution becomes immediately clear.

You can't see the solution while you think there's a problem because then you're trying to figure out what action you can take to feel and think differently or change other people. I'm going to say that again. If you think there's a problem, something has gone wrong, and circumstances or other people need to change for you to feel better, you will never be able to figure out the action that solves that problem.

Because taking action doesn't change your thoughts and feelings, and it won't change other people. So there's no solution to the problem of how you feel other than changing your thoughts and feelings. So I'm going to

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give you a couple of examples from questions I got to kind of help you understand this.

So for instance, I got a question that said, "How do you balance your emotions are caused by your thoughts against manners? If I'm having a conversation with a friend and she says something that most people would deem to be rude, where does that fall? Is it my responsibility to not allow that to affect my emotions and just ignore it or do I say something about her rudeness? If somebody else can't make me feel a certain way, then does it really matter if they're rude or not?"

So, when it is appropriate to say something to someone about their rudeness? So this is a perfect example. The reason this person can't figure out what to do is that she still believes her own thoughts. She still thinks her friend is being rude. And she's trying to make it global by saying other people would think it's rude too. That's what our brain always does.

If we question its optional thoughts, it's like hey listen, I have plenty of evidence, other people agree with me. But so what? I mean, a lot of people agree the Earth is flat. Doesn't make it true. So in this situation, this person thinks the question is like, well, when should I say something? When is it appropriate to tell someone about how they're being rude?

And then she says, "How do I prevent accidental rudeness or hurting of somebody else's feelings? And when should I apologize?" She's really focused on the actions because she doesn't see - which again, totally normal. This is not a criticism. This is new work, but I want to use this example for you guys.

This letter writer doesn't see that all of these are optional thoughts. That rudeness is not a circumstance. That's an optional, subjective thought she has about someone else's behavior. So then she wants to know what

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actions should she take while keeping the thought that it's rude. And of course she can't figure her way out of this conundrum and she's really right in a way because there is no way out of that conundrum.

Because if you accept your own and believe your own belief that the other person is being rude or that you're being rude or that you can hurt other people's feelings, if you accept those incorrect premises, then you will always be confused about when you should say sorry or when you should apologize or when you should manage your own mind.

The answer is always. You should always manage your own mind. And once that's clear, if I were coaching this letter writer, what I would do is coach her about these thoughts she has about other people being rude or the idea that she could hurt other people's feelings. If she lets go of those, then she'll see how to act.

But I can't just tell her how to act because there is no answer to when it is appropriate to say something or when should I apologize. There is no answer to that. It's always going to be situation specific, but when you're clear, that's when you can take action.

What's so fascinating about "rudeness" and apologizing in particular is that people think that if you stop believing that you can hurt other people's feelings, you'll be mean to them. And what I have found is the exact opposite. Now that I understand that I have no control over someone else's feelings and I can only manage my own mind, I will apologize all the time.

I don't care, because I'm not making it mean anything bad about me or bad about them, and I don't believe someone has to be actually objectively right or wrong, that I shouldn't apologize if I'm not wrong. I'm not caught up in any of that. I'm just like, oh, you want me to apologize, sure, I'm sorry. It has no emotional charge for me.

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And I'm so much kinder to people. The whole reason that people are "rude," if that was a real thing is because of their own thoughts and feelings that are creating them feeling defensive or insecure or whatever else. So I'm so much nicer now. That's kind of a side note, but I just think it's fascinating. It's one of those things that's like, exactly the opposite.

It's like when people think that learning to feel confident will make them cocky or arrogant and they'll be self-absorbed, and it's like, the reality is the exact opposite. Self-loathing is incredibly self-absorbed. When you actually feel good about yourself, you don't sit around thinking about yourself. You're just off doing other shit, usually serving other people.

Okay, so I'm going to give you guys another example. I have another question that's very similar in the kind of wanting this action answer. So this person says, "I'm been in on again off again friends with benefits scenario for two years. It's easy and convenient because we live close to each other and have a few of the same friends."

She loves his family, they have fun together. "He's been clear and firm he's not willing to commit to me for his own various reasons, we don't..." I'm just condensing this. So she says, "My thoughts are gravitating towards thoughts like this is no longer serving me, I deserve better and I want someone who chooses me."

And then she says, "Now, I don't understand what you would suggest I do in this situation. I feel like a lot of what you practice and I've heard you say in the podcast about having a managed mind would lead me towards keeping him in my life and determining I should stay in this situation. Because it's not serving me is just a thought I'm having, but either way that doesn't change the fact that he doesn't choose me, and yet I really do feel as though it's unhealthy because it's preventing us both from finding more fulfilling relationships."

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Okay, so this is another perfect example. This person is, of course, as we all are, again, never a criticism when I'm reading these emails but these people have asked me for my "advice," what my perspective is, so I'm just going to be real about that. This letter writer is completely believing all of her thoughts about the situation and then she's asking me what would I suggest she do.

She's like, "I have conflicting thoughts, I don't understand what you would suggest I do." Of course, because your thoughts lead to your feelings lead to your actions. So when you don't know what to do, it's because you have conflicting thoughts and you haven't resolved them, and you're believing them.

So this letter writer is believing that he doesn't choose her, which is a totally optional thought. Yes, he said he's not willing to commit to her, whatever that means, I don't know, it seems like they've been involved for a few years and she's met his family but maybe he doesn't want to get engaged or he doesn't want to get married, whatever it is.

Her thought is that he is not choosing her. Now, she could totally choose to think he obviously is choosing her, apparently like, multiple times a week. But either way, those are both just optional thoughts. But because she has this thought, "He's not choosing me," and then she has the thought that she loves him and has fun with him and then she has the thought, "This isn't serving me," and then she has the thought, "I deserve better," and she has the thought, "I want someone who chooses me," she can't figure out what to do.

And then she thinks that I would have a suggestion for what she should do, but of course I don't have a suggestion for what she should do in terms of taking action. And then she says, "I feel like what I've heard you say in the

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podcast would mean I should keep him in my life and I should stay in the situation because it not serving me is just a thought I'm having."

Here's the thing you guys; everything is just a thought you're having. Yeah, that's a thought you're having that it's not serving you. It's also going to be a thought you're having if you decide I really want to find the love of my life who wants to get married. It's all thoughts. The idea that something is a thought doesn't mean you shouldn't ever believe it. You have to have some thoughts. None of us are trying to reach enlightenment with no thoughts.

The point is to understand that all your thoughts are optional and choose them and I have no ideas what this letter writer should do because that's not my job, and she can't figure it out because she is all up in believing all of her thoughts. This is why I always say - I say this almost every episode I feel like - it's not if the thoughts are true, it's if they're helpful.

So if this letter writer has a goal of getting married and having children and her partner has said that he doesn't want to do those things and she knows that those are non-negotiable for her, then absolutely she should work on practicing thoughts that will help her - not should, but I always advise cultivating your thoughts to help you achieve the goals you've decided on purpose that you want and you like your reason.

So if she knows I want to get married and have children, I like my reasons, it's not about validation, it's not about everyone says I should, it's like that's truly what I want to do, it's important to me, I want to be a mother, I want to be a wife, I want to be married, and this man is not going to do it or this person, any gender, is not going to do that with me, then of course, you might want to cultivate thoughts that will help you take the action of leaving.

So thought work doesn't have - part of what I'm trying to say here is like, this letter kind of assumes that thought work has a predetermined outcome.

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Like, oh you would say I should stay because the idea that it's not serving me is a thought I'm having. But thought work doesn't have any preconditioned outcome. That's what your brains have.

Your brains have ideas about what you should and shouldn't do. Thought work doesn't. Thought work is neutral. It doesn't have a goal or a bias. The point of thought work is to see that your thoughts are optional thoughts and then decide what to do.

In this situation, what's so fascinating about it is that this letter writer kind of wants to push back against me in her own head and defend the idea that the relationship isn't serving her. But she has the thought now and it's not helping her leave.

So this is why you always have to look at the result of your thoughts. It sounds like if you think, "This isn't serving me, I deserve better, I want someone who chooses me," would help you leave a relationship, but that's not true. It doesn't. That's why you have to look at the reality, the result. Your actions will always come from your thoughts and your feelings.

So it's never about the action. It's not about choosing the action. It's about looking at the thoughts and feelings. These thoughts and feelings are actually not leading this person to leave the relationship because even though they might sound nice, they don't actually produce confidence that would lead to leaving.

Because the thought, "This isn't serving me and I deserve better and I want someone who chooses me," are such painful thoughts for her and they make her feel inadequate and insecure, and that does not lead to taking brave, decisive action. So this is why you can't just try to figure out what the action is and work backwards while you're still believing your old thoughts. You'll just get confused.

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You have to clean up all the thinking so that you are not resisting reality. You are not making what other people are doing or saying mean something about them or about you. You're not in a victim mode in your brain. And you really have to check in with how the thoughts make you feel and not just try to skip that part and jump ahead to see what you should do.

I have no idea whether this person should leave this relationship. That's none of my business really. What I do know is that her thoughts are totally muddled and she's believing all of her thoughts. She calls it a fact that he's not choosing her, which is not a fact at all, and she's believing they're all facts and so she's confused and she wants to know what to do.

And what I know is that the answer is she has to clean up her thinking. Later she says, "I'm not sure if managing my mind would lead me down the path of least resistance, to a place where I can endure and continue on this path, or if it would mean I find the courage to honor my thoughts and feelings and move on to find a relationship that will better serve me."

She doesn't want to manage her mind because she thinks she needs to know the outcome before she gets there. She's like, I need to know the action I'm supposed to take and then I'll manage my mind to get there. That's not how it works. You can't see the action. You can't see where you're trying to go when you're believing all your thoughts.

The action will flow naturally from the thought and feeling once the thought and feeling are clear and in alignment. And by alignment, I mean like you've chosen them on purpose and they feel good to you. They're not about attachment, they're not about insecurity, they're not about trying to control other people or judge them or judge yourself.

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When you have cleaned up your thinking and you can really see it as thinking and choose how you want to think, that's when the feeling and the action will flow naturally.

Alright, that is the lesson for today. It is never what action should you take. It is always how can I get more and more perspective on these thoughts and see my thoughts as thoughts and figure out what I want to think on purpose based on releasing my attachment to my story and seeing how these thoughts, what kind of feelings and actions they produce. Rather than believing there's a right answer to the action and wanting to know what that is.

These letters are such perfect examples of how when you believe that, you actually get completely stuck and that's not what we want. Alright, those are the letters for today. That's my lesson for today, chickens.

And then I just want to remind you, if you want to get the Feel Better and Get Shit Done workbook and I don't know why you wouldn't because those are all things we want to do - I want to get that workbook - you're going to text your email to 347-997-1784. That's 347-997-1784 and then you're going to text your email address to that and then when you get the question asking for the secret code or password, you're going to text "feelbetter," all one word. And that workbook's going to help you both get your mind in place and take some action.

Alright my chickens, I will 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.