

UFYB 84: Talking to Yourself



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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. How are you guys? How are you all? Chickens, fowl, people of any gender. Not just guys. I am excited today. I'm like, mentally a little bit exhausted but also really excited because I am doing a lot of planning for next year in the *Unfuck Your Brain* universe and there are some big changes coming.

So I'm going to tell you more about those at the end of this episode, so make sure you listen because it kind of impacts some of y'all, or all of y'all depending on how you think about it. But today before we get to that, we are going to talk about the difference between talking and listening, especially when it comes to yourself.

So when I was thinking about this topic, it made me think about my grandfather who was the dean of NYU Medical school for several decades and he was really widely revered and feared. And at his funeral, one of his colleagues told me that one of the secrets to his authority was that he usually sat quietly during meetings while everyone else was pining and arguing and trying to convince everyone.

And then towards the end he would say kind of one simple impactful thing and everybody would end up falling in line behind him and agreeing with him. And so in other words, he listened more than he talked. And I think this is a great model to follow when it comes to interacting with other people. When we're talking with other people, I think listening more than you talk almost always serves you well, and most of us don't do it enough.

But when it comes to ourselves, most of us listen to ourselves way too much and that's what I'm going to talk about today. So I got this idea from a

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man named Dr. James Gills and if you all think I am productive, this dude is like, another level. He's performed more lens implant and cataract surgeries than any other ocular surgeon in the world, he distributes 40,000 free copies of his books in prisons every month and he is the only person that I am aware of, that Google is aware of, to have completed six double Ironman triathlons, and the last double Ironman triathlon he did in his 50s.

So it's not even regular Ironman triathlon. We're talking about double ones. So this guy gets shit done and does really difficult things, and I learned about him and I was reading about him because when someone asked him the secret to his success, he said, "I talk to myself more than I listen to myself."

When I heard that, I just stopped dead in my tracks because it's so simple and it's so fucking brilliant. Most of us go through life just listening to our brains. We just believe whatever we think. What the weather's like, what we want to eat, what object is over there on the table, what can we do, accomplish, or be? We listen, listen, listen all day long.

And humans have an estimated 60,000 thoughts throughout the day, and most of them are running subconsciously but plenty of them are conscious and we're just listening to our own nonsense all day long. And Dr. Gills talked about how if he listened to himself, his brain, he would tell himself he's too old, he's too tired, hurts too much, he can't do it.

And you can't even complete one Ironman with that thought pattern, much less a double Ironman, much less six of them. So he said that the secret to his success is that he makes sure that he is talking to himself more than he is just listening to himself. He tells himself what to think rather than the other way around.

I really love feats of physical strength and endurance as kind of thought work examples because the truth is that while the physical is part of it, so

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much of it is mental. I think I mentioned this on the podcast before, but I'm just kind of obsessed with this example right now. Before the 1950s, it was widely accepted that it was impossible for a human body to run a mile in less than four minutes.

And when I say that, I mean people really believe this. Four minutes was considered to be the biological mechanical capacity of a human body. It could not be done in less time than that. And then in 1954, someone ran a four-minute mile. And then just two months later, two other people did it, and now it's not that uncommon. Thousands of people have done it. It's not that uncommon among elite runners.

My favorite part here is actually the two months later part. It's not that the one guy was able to do it. That's amazing, but what kills me, what I love is that it wasn't just that one person was born who had the exact right body for it, who had a weirdly abnormal leg length or muscle fibers or whatever. It was a mental restriction.

One person did it and then as soon as people heard it was possible, then two more people did it, and then another person, and another person. And now it's not surprising to any of us. It's just the norm among elite male racers. That's because it was a mental limitation for so many people. And the reason that all of a sudden now people can do it is that they believe that it's possible.

So when I was creating the material for this podcast, I was thinking about why do I love Dr. Gills articulation of this concept so much, like why does this get its one whole podcast? I talk about changing your thoughts all the time, I talk about not believing everything your brain says. What's so beautiful about I talk to myself more than I listen to myself?

And I think that it's because it captures the kind of ongoing conversational nature of thought work. I see in people who are new to thought work

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sometimes that they come up with a new thought and then they think it's supposed to magically permeate their brains. Or they practice it once or twice a day, and listen, that's better than nothing, for sure. Every little bit counts.

But the truth is your brain is talking to you all day every day and so if you are only practicing one or two intentional thoughts once or twice a day, you are not running the conversation. Your brain is. I think we come to thought work and it's like, our default is okay, my brain talks to me all the time and I'll try challenging and changing a few of those thoughts. That's what we think.

But what if your default expectation was that it's your job to talk to your brain instead of the other way around? What I love about this formulation is that it's so proactive. It's not like, oh, I'll see what my brain says and then if it doesn't say a great thing then I'll work on changing that. It's so passive kind of the way that we think about even our thought work I think, and that's what I love about this so much is that it's so proactive.

It's like, you stop listening to yourself and you start talking to yourself. You don't just see what happens and then see if it's going to be helpful and then maybe you'll change some of it if not. You just decide ahead of time what's going to be helpful and what you want to believe, and you talk to your brain. You take control of the situation.

So it's just such an important distinction and I really don't want you to just gloss over it. What if the primary way that you related to your brain was that you told it what to think? Not just that you challenged some of the things it already wants to think. What if you decided on purpose to talk to your brain about anything? Not just respond to what your brain says to you, but what if you ran the table? What if you ran the game? What if you ran the conversation because you talked to yourself more than you listen to yourself about anything?

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Your job, your love life, your kids, your home, your purpose on this earth. What if you talked to your brain more than you listened to it? The only thing holding you back in your life from anything you want right now is that you are listening to your brain when it tells you all the reasons it can't do it or can't have it.

It's like you propose a project and your brain vetoes it and then you're like, okay, well I guess I can't do it then. But if you are the one talking to your brain, it's not even up to your brain to veto. You're not asking your brain for permission to think something or do something. You are telling it what you're going to do.

And that doesn't mean getting all weird and agro with your brain. It's talking. Not yelling. The quote isn't I yell at my brain more than I listen to it. We don't have to yell. And it's actually counterproductive to yell. I see new students often getting kind of mad or resistant or agitated when their old thoughts come up, but that is a sure sign that you don't realize yet that thoughts are harmless.

They're only a problem if you believe them. But them just floating to the surface or being in your brain is not a big deal. It's like if you're allergic to oranges, having an orange in your house is not a problem. It's only a problem if you eat it. Just having it there is not a big deal.

And it's the same with your thoughts. Having your old or negative thoughts show up in your brain doesn't mean you need to freak out. They're only a problem when you believe them. And when you're believing your thoughts, that means you are listening to your brain instead of talking to it.

So instead, we're not going to yell at our brain, we just want to talk to it gently but firmly. I was dying the other day laughing because one of my Clutch students said that she went to workout and she hadn't brought her

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water bottle. And so lizard brain said that she could only walk, she couldn't run.

And she said that she petted it and told it it was fine and that was an optional thought and she was going to run anyway. And I just love that idea of petting your lizard and then telling it what you're going to do. You're like, oh honey, that's hilarious. No, this is what we're doing. This is what we're thinking.

That is talking to your brain. She didn't freak out and try to throw the lizard across the room or step on it. She just gave it a little pet and then told it what she was going to think instead. So much more effective, so much more pleasant.

It's also an important distinction because I do teach a lot of awareness building, which means you do need to learn to observe your brain. But observing isn't the same as listening in this context. Observing means seeing what thoughts are lying around in your brain, and then talking to your brain to tell it what you want it to believe.

Listening to your brain is when you hear or see the thoughts and believe them, and you let them tell you what you can think or do or feel or be. It's being the passive party. It's being the child to your own thoughts or your own brain.

So just think about what would be different in your life if you talked to your brain more than you listened to it. The answer is everything that you can think of. So, speaking of which, I told you that I would update you on what's changing in my universe at the end of this podcast. The most significant changes that my *Unfuck Your Brain* program, which is my small group, more intensive, lots of attention from me coaching program is ending this year, in 2019.

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So if you're listening to this when this episode comes out, it's June. Next month, July 2019, the last group that I'm ever going to start in the program begins in July. And when that class graduates in December 2019, then the program is over. That's it.

I have really loved this program so much. I'll have run it for two years by the time it's over. It's the closest way I work with students and I get to know each and every one of them so well. It's amazing and I love it, but like everything in business and in life, you often have to give up things you love to create whatever amazing thing you want to do next.

So there will be exciting new things coming, but what - and I don't know exactly what those are yet. I have some ideas that aren't ready to be shared, but what I do know is that this is the last time that it will be possible to work with me this closely forever. In order to reach more women and change more lives and grow this business and this organization and this mission, I won't be doing anything that is this much attention from me for each individual in the future.

So, if you've been thinking about it, if you have been thinking yeah, maybe I'll apply in a few months or I want to but I'm nervous or what if I don't get in, whatever it is, now is the time. Actually, we just had this conversation in The Clutch because somebody had applied and gotten in and she posted asking if people had any experience about *Unfuck Your Brain* they wanted to share, and just totally unprompted, all these alums in the group wrote such amazing descriptions of their experiences, so I want to share some of those with you so that you know whether this is the right time for you and if you want to apply, since this is your last chance.

So, one of them said, "It was such an amazing experience for me and super transformational. Graduating from *Unfuck Your Brain*, I am so much more calmer, present, confident, and way less reactive in my everyday life, and having the regular and personalized coaching made all the difference

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to me. So many times my brain would be freaking out but being able to post in the Slack or talk about it on a call always resolved it."

Another one said, "*Unfuck Your Brain* is another level. I completely transformed my life as a result, which I never would have had the courage to do before I learned these tools." And there's so many more. I'm looking at them all and I want to read them all but I'm not going to read them all. I'm going to read you one last short one.

She said, "The program changed my life. My view on the purpose of my life and how I handle the things I find hard. The work will never stop, but the results are obvious. Frankly, knowing what I know now, I don't think you can put a price on it."

So, that's the words from their own mouths. I wanted to share those because it's one thing to hear me talk about it. It's another thing to hear women who've gone through it talk about it. And I don't want anyone to get - I mean, I guess some of you don't listen to the podcast in order, so this may happen, but I don't want anyone to get to like, next year and think okay, I'm ready to apply and not know that the program is over.

So this is the last shot. The group is going to start the first week of July, so if you're listening to this with the week or the next week that it comes out, now is the time. Go apply. It's www.unfuckyourbrain.com/program and I just am doing the mental prediction math. We will probably have a couple of spots left at this point, so if you've always told yourself you were going to do it but you were waiting until you didn't feel scared, unfortunately we're not going to be able to wait that long.

This is the last chance, and I would love to get to know you and be able to coach you at that deep level and really build that relationship not just with me but with yourself. It really is life-changing work. It's my honor to do it and I hope to see you there. Alright, bye y'all. Talk to you next week.

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