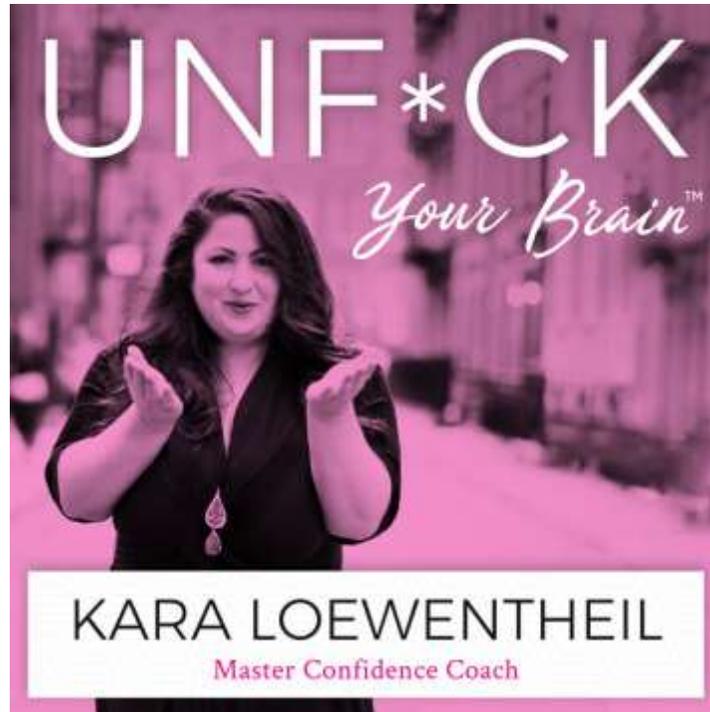


## UFYB 122: Silver Linings + Positive Spin



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

[UnF\\*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](#)

## UFYB 122: Silver Linings + Positive Spin

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? Are we all surviving February? I was just laughing with my friend Kelly, who's a friend of mine from law school because we used to have a rule that we're not allowed to make any life decisions in February, because especially in law school, February, you were just kind of prone to lose your mind.

Now that I know about thought work obviously, I no longer have decision-making rules for specific months, but I do sometimes have to ask myself like, if I was light outside and warm, would I make the same decision? What would I be thinking then? But we're almost to March, I think we're going to make it.

And I really shouldn't complain because I just got back from a weekend in San Francisco where it was 60 degrees and beautiful. San Francisco is really bringing it. I decided to run away for the weekend to spend some time with my dear friends who live in the Bay area. I got to spend six hours one day with my friend Rachel, who's an amazing coach, one of my best friends who I met in 2015 when I went to coach training.

And then the next day I got to spend another chunk of time with my friend Ashby who is an amazing therapist and who I've known since I was 13. So that's like, 25 years. That's crazy. And we were laughing about how her husband asked me a question about the constitution and she was like, "Why are you asking her that?" And he said, "Well, she was a lawyer."

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And we were laughing about how she'd basically forgotten that I ever was a lawyer because having known me since I was 13, she just thinks of being a coach as being kind of such a continuation of who I am and how I think about the world that she just kind of mentally deleted the whole decade that I was doing something else.

We've known each other for a quarter of a century, so that was just a blip to her. We were talking about our senior yearbook pages because I looked at mine recently, and it's so funny because on the one hand I have grown and changed so much over time in the way that I show up and think about myself and the world, and yet when I was 18, I was picking quotes for my senior page that were about what constitutes the good life and about kind of literature and narrative.

And then in law school I was writing papers about narrative psychology and restorative justice. I've had these same intellectual interests in a way since I was a child pretty much, so it's just so interesting to see sort of both how much you can change and then what stays the same.

So anyway, I do not really have a very impressive segue into today's episode. Today's lesson is going to be on the shorter side. Short and sweet, but it's such an important topic and you're going to want to re-listen to it probably and really practice it because it's easy to understand but it's very sneaky in operation.

And it's something I see almost every single student I have do when they learn about how to change their thoughts. So I'm going to teach you all about that. Before I get to that, make sure you listen all the way to the end because I have a giveaway for you guys of something I get asked for all the time. So I have a free giveaway, so listen all the way to the end of the episode for that.

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Okay, so what are we talking about today? What is a silver lining? Let's talk about what that means in a thought work context. So it's only natural, I think, that when we learn we can change our thoughts, then we just want to change all of them. That's why we were motivated to learn these tools in the first place.

We want to change our thinking. So we jump in with both feet and we want to change all of our thoughts, but the problem is that when we try to do that, we're in a rush. And I talk a lot on the podcast and I coach on The Clutch all the time about how it doesn't work to try to rush to change your thoughts for a couple of reasons.

So one is that when you're in a rush to change your thought, you can't actually see it clearly. Literally think about rushing past something. You can't even really see what it is. Is that a table or a small hippo? Who knows? When you're in a rush, you can't see it clearly.

And so, often what we try to do is we don't slow down to really see and examine our underlying thoughts, so we just don't question parts of them. We just keep believing them, and then we try to think a better thought about it, or we try to be more positive about it.

So I'm going to give you some examples to help you explain because it's simple to explain but it's really mind-blowing to see when you really start examining your own thoughts and seeing where you're doing this. So let's say you have a lot of negative thoughts about your job. Let's say you think your boss is an asshole and your colleagues steal your ideas and there's too much work and it's toxic. Just for starters.

You think this is a terrible job. So when you are in a rush to change that thought and you're trying to get away from it, you don't even stop to notice that this is a terrible job is just a thought you have. So you start trying to

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really quickly think different thoughts like, “This is a terrible job but it’s teaching me how to stand up for myself.”

Now, I call this silver-lining it because you’re keeping your assumption and your thought that your job is terrible, and you haven’t interrogated or questioned that at all. You just are believing that that’s a true circumstance in the world and then you just want to find a way to think a little bit better about it.

It’s like putting lipstick on a pig, that old expression. That’s what silver lining is. You just want to be a little more positive about it. You just want to look for the good side. You just want to look for the growth opportunity. But implicit in all of that is your belief that the job truly is terrible, that your negative thought about the circumstance is just true.

But all of your thoughts about what’s wrong with your job are optional thoughts. They’re not true circumstances. Your job isn’t terrible. That’s just a thought you have about it. And when you are in a rush to change it and you’re trying to silver-lining it, you’re skipping over seeing how that is just a thought.

You’re letting that thought fade into the background like it’s a true circumstance of life and then you’re just trying to think something positive about it. You’re looking for a silver lining to your job being terrible. This is kind of an aside, but I think any time you have a thought about how you’re going to stand up for yourself, that’s a good sign that you are believing your thoughts about someone else’s behavior and that you haven’t really worked through your thoughts yet.

It’s almost always kind of a silver lining way because it links how you want to behave to your perception that other people’s behavior is wrong and you have to teach them something with your actions. So that’s sort of a little tangent, but any time you’re thinking, “Well, I have to stand up for myself,”

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you have not fully looked at the underlying thought you have about what's going on.

So let's do another silver lining example. Let's say you might have a lot of negative thoughts about your business and how it's not working if you're trying to be a coach or an architect or whatever you might want to be. So you decide to practice thinking something like, "Well, my business not working is giving me an opportunity to learn how to make it work and get good at failing."

Sounds so nice, sounds like you're trying to think positive, sounds like you're trying to look on the bright side, but you're skipping over the part where my business isn't working is a thought. It's an optional thought. It's not a true statement of fact. There's no objective description of that.

But because you're in such a rush to try to feel better about it not working and you try to layer on the silver lining, you miss the opportunity to really see how that is an optional thought. Let's say you have the thought that your partner should be providing more financially for your family.

And so you decide to think, "Well, my partner not making enough money is really giving me an opportunity to be more thrifty and learn to stick to a budget." You're trying to find the silver lining, look on the bright side, what could be good about this, but you aren't questioning your belief that the underlying thing is bad.

You're not questioning your belief that your partner's not making enough money. You're taking that as a fact that not making enough money is an objective fact and then you're trying to find a way to feel better about it. But that's just your optional thought about whatever the circumstance is of how much money your partner makes.

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Let's say you have the thought that your sister complains a lot and you find that annoying. So you want to try to be compassionate, so you try to believe, "Well, she just complains because she doesn't know about thought work. I'll try to be compassionate about it. I'll try to set a good example for her."

But you're believing, you're rushing right past and believing your thought that she's complaining and that she shouldn't complain. It'd be better if she didn't complain. Because you're in such a rush to add the silver lining or find the silver lining, you're just skipping the part where you would really have to grapple with your underlying thought.

Your sister complaining is not a circumstance. It's your thought that she's complaining. She's just saying words. It's your thought that she's complaining that's causing all of your agitation and then you're trying to find a silver lining.

So you know that you are silver-lining it when you're trying to feel better about what you believe is a negative circumstance. So you have the thought that something is bad and you want to feel better about that 'bad' thing, so you rush to put a positive spin on it.

But the real thought work is in seeing that the thing is not bad, whatever it is. It's an optional thought. A lot of my clients do a similar thing with gratitude. I call it gratitude speckling. You might have a lot of negative thoughts about your child's behavior and then you decide to try to just think, "Well, I'm grateful my child is healthy," instead.

But you haven't really addressed your original thoughts. You're basically just trying to think, "Well, I'm grateful my child is healthy even though they're doing all these bad things that make me feel bad." Even though they have these bad behaviors and they're not acting the way they should. That's silver-lining it.

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You're like, well the silver lining is they're healthy. You aren't questioning all of your thoughts about their behavior that are causing your negative emotions. So gratitude speckling is like a subset of silver lining, but it's just specific to gratitude and I like to talk about it because I find women in particular are constantly trying to pretend that they feel grateful for things that they actually don't feel grateful for and are angry about because they haven't really done the thought work to really unpack those underlying thoughts.

So whether it's gratitude or some other kind of silver lining, what's happening is that you're believing your own thoughts about something being negative and then you're just trying to layer on a more positive attitude. Now listen, it's okay that you do this. All humans do this. It's just a brain habit. Sometimes it's the best you can do.

Sometimes your brain is just not cooperating, it's the best you can do and it works okay. It's better than not doing anything. But I think you are really always better served by being willing to just sit with seeing how much you believe and are attached to your original negative thoughts.

Because you are not going to get much growth when you are silver-lining it. You may get a little emotional relief sometimes, and you know what, sometimes we just need that. In my opinion it's better than popping a pill or something. I don't mean prescribed medication that you need. I mean like, better than recreationally getting high to get away from your feelings.

Like okay, silver-lining it, give yourself a little emotional relief. But you aren't really going to learn anything about yourself or your mind by doing that. Because you aren't really being honest with yourself. You aren't being willing to truly question your underlying thoughts and beliefs, and you're rushing past all the learning that is there if you slow down and really do some thought work on all your underlying beliefs and assumptions here.

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You're believing all your own drama and then you're just trying to feel a little bit better about it. But the problem is what you miss is that you're the one creating the drama. It's like you set fire to your house and now you're going to try to put the fire out. And so the best-case scenario is you have like a, wet, half-burned house.

That's better than no house maybe, but what if we learned how to stop setting fire to the house in the first place? That would be better. When you are silver-lining it, you are creating negative emotion with your original thoughts and then you're trying to find the bright side of the story that you just made up with your thoughts in the first place.

It's a lot of convoluted drama and it's not that effective when we could just question the original story, rather than make up an original story, cause ourselves pain, then try to find the bright side, make up a bright side to the original dramatic negative story that we made up in the first place.

So I want to encourage you next time you're coming up with a new thought and you're trying to look for the bright side or look for the positive spin, to really slow down and look at those original thoughts. If you're looking for a positive spin or bright side or a silver lining, it's because you think there's an existing negative thing, but there isn't.

There's just the negative spin of your own unconscious thoughts. And if you take the time to really recognize that, you'll get so much deeper with your thought work. So look beneath that silver lining to the next level. Where are you believing your own thoughts? Where have you not questioned your evaluations or assumptions? Where are you in a rush to find a new thought that's keeping you from seeing your existing fundamental thoughts that are optional about this? Whatever this thing is.

Ask yourself those questions and your thought work is going to become truly more transformative. If you are already in The Clutch, I want you to go

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into the Facebook group and post about an example of this from your own thought work because I guarantee you all have one. And you're going to learn so much from reading each other's examples.

If you're not in The Clutch, you should come join us so you can do that. It's [unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch). Alright, so here's the free giveaway. Last thing for this week. I get so many questions about what I'm reading or what I recommend reading and I have a list you can get for free.

So you just need to text your email to +13479971984 and you'll get a text back asking for the codeword and you just text back the word reading. So text your email to +13479971984 and then when you get a text asking for the codeword, you just text back the word reading.

If you can't text, you don't want to text, just go to [unfuckyourbrain.com/readinglist](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/readinglist) and you can sign up to get it there. And if you're in The Clutch, you don't need to do that. You already have this, it's in your bonus section in the memberships site. It's the same place where all those bonus workbooks on dating and work anxiety and the pep talks I do for you all, that stuff, it's all there.

So you don't need to double up. Just log into membership side or check the Facebook group. It's there too. Alright my chickens, keep an eye out for silver lining this week and I'll talk to you soon.

If this episode spoke to you, then you need to check out The Clutch because it comes with a five-week self-coaching course that will walk you through exactly how to apply this life-changing work to anything you experience. Literally anything.

If you've ever thought, "I don't know how to get started or I don't know exactly how to do thought work or if I'm doing it right or what order I should do it in or how I should do it," the self-coaching course teaches you all of

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that. And even if you're familiar with thought work concepts, The Clutch will help you take the work deeper and it comes with access to expert coaches who can answer any thought work question you have, plus me of course to coach you live.

No question is off limits. You can change your life by going to [unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch) or you can actually just text your email to 347-934-8861 and we will send a link to all the information you need straight to your cellphone. I'll see you there.