

UFYB 131: A Year of Thought Work Vol. 2 - Dating, Breakups, & Social Justice



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.

Kara: Hello, my chickens. I am so excited about the conversation that I am going to share with you today. So today's episode is a conversation with two more of my students, Deb and Marissa, both of whom are students who have been in The Clutch for a year and are just such amazing examples of what is possible with this work.

And of course, there are similar themes to some extent in all of these conversations because of how our brains are. But they worked on really interesting different issues that I just can't wait for you guys to hear about. So in my conversation with Marissa, we talk a lot about dating and anxious attachment and preoccupied attachment and dating anxiety. I know a lot of you who listen to this share those thought patterns. So you can find it super helpful. And she talks about how she ended up changing her thinking and what's different about the relationship that she's able to be in now.

And then also a conversation with my student, Deb, who, interestingly enough, had the opposite. Went through a breakup right before she started doing this work with me and was able to handle the breakup in such a different way because of thoughtwork. Deb is also a long-time social justice advocate and human. And we talk a lot in this conversation about what makes The Clutch such a special space in online feminist activist social justice work and how important sort of different kinds of inclusivity are, but also how some of the more mainstream feminist and social justice spaces actually end up stifling growth and solidarity building because of the lack of thought work that's being brought to bear on what's going on.

So it's such a rich and interesting conversation. And I think, you know, whether you are particularly interested in social justice and politics, it will be

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interesting to you, of course. But even if you're not, a lot of what we talk about is relevant to just the conversations we have with lots of people in our lives who don't know about thought work and kind of why it's so problematic to just validate other people or get validated all the time and be told that our thoughts and feelings are true. And to think of ourselves only as victims, like all of it, is so relevant whether or not you are particularly social justice oriented. But if you are, I think there'll be an extra layer of interest for you.

I'm just super excited. I love these students. I'm so, so proud of the work they've done and how they've blown their own minds. And I think you're going to just learn so much from their experiences. So without further ado, here's our conversation.

Kara: Hey Marissa, thank you for joining us today. So tell everybody just a little bit about yourself.

Marissa: Yes. My name's Marissa. I'm 31, I live in Oakland, California. And I'm definitely an overachiever, type-A perfectionist.

Kara: So many of them are. Although at least you recognize that. I feel like a lot of people when they start are like, "no, I'm not like that. I just don't ever do enough." They don't realize that they're actually secretly perfectionists. Right? So tell me, what brought you to this work in The Clutch? Was there something specific you wanted to work on?

Marissa: Yeah. So I had gotten so much out of the podcast when I started listening to the podcast, I was miserable at work. And just the idea that, oh, these thoughts are like optional blew my mind. And so I used the podcast to really change my experience at work. And so when you launched The Clutch, I was in a space where I wanted to do that with dating, but it seemed like I needed more than just the podcast because I was applying it, but I really had a lot more work to do.

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So it was like, OK, I need more tools. I need someone to help me, perfect timing. And for me, I'm normally the type of person, to do something I need all the details. Like if I'm going in a new restaurant, I look at the menu, I look at the pictures inside, do the Google Maps where I'm the person outside to see where to park. This was just like I pulled off the band-aid, I made the immediate decision and I'm really glad I did, otherwise, I probably would have waited in indecision for months.

Kara: Yeah, I love that because I think you're right. Like a lot of people, one area of our life would be like, okay, I can handle this on my own. And then we get to another area in our brain. We're like, wow, what is happening up in here like this is beyond. But I also love that you mentioned I would like to hear more what you think about this, because I think that a lot of people are like, well, what's the difference between the podcast and joining The Clutch? You're like, how is it? What would you learn new things? How is it any better? How is it any different? So I'd love to hear what your thoughts are about that.

Marissa: Yeah, I mean, the amount of tools, there are so many opportunities to get support, I mean, that's the biggest thing. I was definitely worried about the costs when I was thinking about joining and now I wouldn't, it doesn't even cross my mind like it's a non-negotiable in my budget. Because there's so many resources, I mean, from the Facebook group, which I really love, and the other chickens to ask the coaches, like the one on one group call coaching calls, all the tools, all the bonus Q&A, all the workbooks. There's not only a lot more of it, but it's tangible tools to use. And then you get a lot of feedback. So that's really what's different, I think, and really can take you further.

Kara: Yeah. I love that. And I'd love to hear what you think. Like, how does it make a difference between you listen to the podcast, you hear a concept, you try to apply it yourself vs. being able to get interactive support. Like what do you think the difference is?

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Marissa: Yeah, because I mean, we all have blind spots or things that we believe so hard that it's hard to really crack it open ourselves and work on changing that belief. So when you get feedback either from the coaches or the other chickens, that really helps. Even I've had experiences where it takes a lot of feedback for me to start to change, I push back.

But like that's the biggest difference is getting feedback, seeing your own blind spots, getting help on ways to think about things differently or shift your thinking. And I think actually giving feedback is helpful too. Giving feedback to other chickens, how I phrase things or what questions I prompt them. You know, when you kind of help support or teach, you're learning as you're doing it, too. It's reinforcing kind of those tools to yourself.

Kara: That's a great point. I actually don't think I've thought of it that way. But like one of the reasons that I'm so good at coaching myself, it goes both ways. I'm good at coaching other people because I coach myself a lot, but I get better at coaching myself when I coach other people. I've thought about that in the context of people watching life coaching and applying it to themselves. But you're totally right that like then trying to teach someone else helps you clarify what's going on with you.

Marissa: Right. In the club you see chickens' journeys with a topic they're struggling with. So it's not just one time. So you see them evolve and you're helping them with that. And so you kind of see kind of the process as well in someone else. And then you can reflect on your own process, too.

Kara: Yeah, that's also such a great point because it is like, yes, sometimes you get a flash of insight, but sometimes it's like you have to knock on that door a bunch of times. Like I think about how committed people were to the idea that the world was flat. Right. They're like, oh, we're going to execute people over this. That's how important this idea is. Right. And now almost none of us think that anymore. But it was so unquestionable. And we all have that in our own brains. Like whatever the thought is, like, this is just absolutely unquestionable, everybody would

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agree, it's true. That it takes that outside perspective to be like, actually, we could let's just maybe be open to the idea of questioning it and then we'll like move along.

Marissa: Yeah. Yeah.

Kara: So tell us a little bit about what your dating life was like before you joined The Clutch. Oh, man. I think a lot of the listeners are going to relate to it as well.

Marissa: It was really anxiety driven, although at the time, I don't know if I would have said that. Now going through and learning what was happening in my brain, I see I was creating a lot of anxiety for myself. At the time I believed it was just, all my thoughts were circumstances. But there was a lot of complaining about online dating, thinking there was no one out there for me. I really believed that there's only a certain amount of people you can fall in love with, like a finite amount of people.

Kara: I love that you're like the universe has decided it's 3.25 average.

Marissa: Right, which then you would think, OK, if you thought that you would go on dates with as many people as you could, but no, of course, my brain's like, I have to figure out who exactly are those finite people.

Kara: Like I need to research it just like I do with restaurants. I need to know exactly who it is ahead of time.

Marissa: Yeah so I was very selective on apps and then I'd go on dates and I'd be very judgmental or I'd have a lot of thoughts about how I was broken or because of my upbringing or my parents' marriage I wasn't going to meet someone. I was really creating a lot of anxiety for myself. And then scarcity, because I also had still had some beliefs that someone else should meet your needs in our relationship. So, you know, combining there's only a certain amount of people you can fall in love with, they need to meet your needs.

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Kara: It's a very small windowing group we're getting there.

Marissa: Which at the time I thought was like a good strategy to meet/find someone. But really, that limits you so much. And so that was so much work to break through. And then the other piece was I was kind of creating this cycle where I couldn't connect with other people. And then I was finding reasons to reject myself. So I would not be vulnerable out of fear of what was going to happen. And then you can't connect emotionally, and then because we weren't connecting, I'd have to over analyze and make assumptions of how they were feeling and analyzing every text.

Like, why didn't they text me in this many hours? What does this tell me or why'd they cancel our date? And so then I'd be creating this experience of rejection for myself. And I was just basically telling my brain to find evidence that I was going to be rejected. I was never going to meet someone. And then I would come to be like, OK, we'll I'll just accept being single for the rest of my life and silver lining it. And, you know, it won't be what it is. That's fine.

Kara: Yeah. Right. It's fine. I'm fine with it. I'm not at all fine. Fine. Tell us, what was your either kind of your biggest victory in this area or just what is your dating experience like now?

Marissa: I mean, I've had so many victories. This is and I mean, I've worked on this the most in the past year. And this is the area where I've had a lot of I've really had to work hard to change my beliefs, like you had mentioned and other coaches, once when I posted about, well, how do I know who to swipe on? Well, if you create love with your thoughts, then, you know, it doesn't matter. You can choose to love anyone. And my friend's like what?

Kara: Everybody hates that teaching at first.

Marissa: But I've worked so hard to change that. And, you know, once I really believed that I could choose to love anyone. And I really didn't need

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anyone else to meet my needs. And the relief from I don't have to meet anyone else's needs either. Like, we're just here to love each other. That created so much abundance. I mean, really. And then I was so much more open on the dating apps of who I'd go on dates with and how the dates went and how I'd interpret their text message or follow up.

And then, you know, another area was around the anxiety around, you know, once I've kind of been dating someone for a while, you know, not over analyzing texts or dates, you coached me on a coaching call that really changed that for me. And one of the things you helped me realize is when I'm so focused on what they're doing and what that might mean or trying to figure out, what it means I'm not even thinking about do I like this person? Is this someone I want to be with?

Kara: Right.

Marissa: So working through that and opening that up and not making meaning out of everything allowed me to kind of make my own assessment, like do I want to be with this person? I mean that was all through 2019 and that changed my dating completely. And now I'm in a relationship and with someone I probably would have never gone on a date with before thoughtwork, and it's great.

And you know, honestly that's not the best part. Like pre-thought work, I'd have been like OK, if I get a boyfriend then that's a sign that I'm fixed. But now it's like, no, that's not a sign. If I was single right now, I'd be talking to you I'd be like, things are amazing. It's not that. It's just who I am, how I'm showing up and like how much I've changed internally.

Kara: Yeah, I think that's so beautiful because it's totally true. It's like the thing we think we want. The best-case scenario is it becomes not as important in the end, right. Because we think we want it and we want it for the wrong reasons to like make us feel okay about ourselves or validate that we're fixed or whatever else. So it's like you do all that work and then

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you usually do get the thing you want, but then you're like, well, okay, that's nice. It's like, not the whole point, totally.

Marissa: It's not like the center of my life. And all of a sudden, I'm validated and worthy, which like followed me my whole life.

Kara: Yeah. People have the same fantasies about that as they do about like being thin or weight loss they're like, you're going to get to the state. And then all of a sudden like everything about your life is going to be different. You're never going to feel lonely or afraid or have any negative emotion. You're always going to feel amazing about yourself. Like it's all going to be... Yeah. I love that. And I think that that teaching of like you can love anyone. It's like often we need such overcorrection to come back to the middle.

Right, because we're like blocking ourselves off so much and being so impossibly picky because we're waiting for someone else to make us feel good, which never happens. So then we have to keep rejecting them. They're still not doing their job, right. Right. So it's like we have to, like, open our brains to the other extreme idea of you could just love anyone. And then what you end up with is somewhere in the middle like you're saying. Right. You end up in a great relationship with someone who maybe you wouldn't originally have thought of because you were like waiting for somebody to create your feelings for you, which they couldn't.

Marissa: Right. And it is also like a recent podcast you did around knowing what you want. You know, when you go to that extreme of you can really love anyone, that really allows you to open up your mind, to figure out, well what do I want? And you're not choosing out of scarcity or choosing out of true preference and not making meaning out of your decisions.

Kara: Yeah. That's so good. It's like you're able, once you're like, oh, I could love anyone, then you can decide, is this thing a thing that really matters or not? Is this thing one thing that really matters? Like what do I, yeah, how important is it to me?

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And I also love like how naturally I thought about asking, like, is she in a relationship now? I love that it naturally came up with like two thirds the way through, because it really isn't the point. If like this was like a dating infomercial, we would have led with that. Like I was single and now I'm in a relationship and this is how I got it. But you're like, oh an afterthought actually, yes, I am in one now, but like that's not even really...

Marissa: I mean, pre-thought work I would had been like first thing, I'm in a relationship now, so it all works.

Kara: Totally, totally. Right. And I love that that's like not even the main. You're like, oh, yeah, I do have a boyfriend now. But really, the point is in my relationship with myself, which is so true. So is there anything it could be about this area or another area... Anything unexpected you discovered through thought work or being coached that you were kind of surprised about?

Marissa: Yeah. I mean, pre-thought work. I would have like, I'm so confident and have no insecurities. Like, I know I'm good enough and worthy, and then through thought work I was like, wow, no I was like on a low level telling myself in different ways that like you're not worthy, you're not good enough. That came to the surface in my nuanced ways that I really worked on. So that was one major area. And then also becoming much more non-judgmental. I mean, I think the model really detaches you from your thoughts and allows you to see, OK, if I have this thought then, of course, I'm creating this result. So that helps you or at least helped me not judge myself as much.

And then The Clutch itself, the way it's setup where chickens are only responding with prompting questions and helping you think through, not their own opinions or judgments. It's just a completely non-judgmental space and it's both good for you know, I feel comfortable posting any feedback. But also, if someone posts something that maybe I have an initial thought reaction to with an opinion, then I really push myself. Why are you

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having this judgment? What is it about you and I never post my opinion, but you know, pushes me and I've noticed in my life and work I am way less judgmental and that feels so much better.

Kara: Yeah. And you get to that point, where you're like, oh, it's so interesting that I'm having such a strong judgment. Like, what am I going to learn about myself? Right. Rather than, like judging the other person or that judging yourself for having judgment. Right. It's more you're just like it's like your brain is a curious little pet you have and you're like, you're doing something weird. What's happening? Let me get in there and look at it.

Yeah, I love that point also about how in The Clutch. Like no one, I think part of what we do. It's like what a good coach does is mirror non-judgment to you. And that's what the whole community does is like when you offer your thoughts and other people engage them non-judgmentally and then you can do that for other people. You're practicing the skill of engaging with your own thoughts non-judgmentally.

Marissa: Yeah, right.

Kara: Just like, oh, these are thoughts, everybody has thoughts. Let me ask questions of them now. I love that first thing you said about how you used to think you were super confident and now you know what actual confidence is. So I'm curious if you can like because one of the things I like to ask about is like, how has your perception of yourself changed? So it's totally on point for that. But I'm wondering what you would say is like, what's the difference between like how you thought you were confident before and how you really feel confident now?

Marissa: Well, I think my confidence before was kind of almost like a rebel reaction to the world of like, no, like the world society can have all these thoughts about women, but I'm going to prove you wrong and I'm going to show up confidently and I'm going to say what I feel and I'm going to get all these degrees and stuff. And yeah, I wanted those things, but I think I showed up in a way almost to prove myself to society and others as a

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woman and someone, you know, from varying different backgrounds that are more underrepresented.

But now I think my confidence is more, it's kind of hard to explain, but I think it comes from more compassion, I think. I've become much more compassionate to myself and others through this work, which I think combined with like internal knowing I'm worthy, I'm enough and not judging myself kind of creates this different type of confidence that isn't necessarily in your face trying to prove anything. It's just kind of a mindset of love and acceptance and knowing almost. I think it's a little hard to explain.

Kara: I think it makes total sense. It's like what you were doing before was like reactive and posturing, kind of. Right. It was like I think you think I'm not good enough, so I'm going to show you I am. Right. It's all like projection. And where you are now is like, that's why I like when people say, well, when I'm really, if I get aggressive and assertive, then I'm penalized for that.

I'm like, if you're being aggressive, it's not coming from true confidence. I don't think that true confidence is aggressive. I think true confidence is like if I say something you don't agree, I'm like, well, that's where you're confused. I'm not I'm not like, let me prove to you I'm right and show you that you have to agree with me. Right. There's all of that like, yeah, I'm trying to control someone else. It's like faux confidence is you trying to control other people and what they think and like make them think a certain thing with your behavior.

And true confidence is like, I know that I'm X, Y, Z. And so if you don't agree, that's like your problem. I don't even know, that's just weird, you're confused. But I'm not like upset by that.

Marissa: Yeah, exactly.

Kara: Yeah, totally. So. I'm curious, just because we're recording this in this kind of crazy time outside of us in the COVID-19 epidemic. I'm

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wondering if or how you feel like the tools in The Clutch have been supportive for you in this kind of time or how you've used the thought to deal with whatever's going on?

Marissa: Yeah, I mean, it definitely has. I think also the lessons I've learned around holding space for others. You know, I've had family members and close friends really much more effective than me. And before my what I'd want to do to help them really to make myself feel better was to kind of, you know, try to fix everything or send them money or do all these things, which, of course, wouldn't work and probably would make them have certain thoughts, create mourning and healing. And now I can just hold space and be a listening ear and be there, but also not let that affect my thoughts or emotion and not take that on myself.

Which helps with me being able to manage what I'm already kind of working with and dealing with. I think in other areas I do live in the Bay Area, so our place is very small. I have a roommate who we also work together and navigating being home all the time, both working from home, you know, using thought work to kind of manage that big shift has been helpful. And then also using thought work to make decisions on purpose. So, you know, I work in academia, I also work at a school public health.

So our workload has gone up and we had a lot of shifts and I made decisions to mute certain email chains or to when we got on email at certain time or, you know, not be a part of certain meetings on purpose to manage my workload, to manage my mental space of processing all that information. Same with social media. You know, I made decisions to only post positive things, to only check a certain amount, and I'm not judging myself for those decisions and I'm not making them for anyone else but myself.

So it's definitely really helped. And then when my mind wants to go to catastrophize, you know, I work through that. That's the biggest thing that

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helps, to help with any catastrophe thoughts and just working through and reminding myself, I've got my back no matter what happens. And I can use these tools if something does happen like those won't go away.

Kara: Yeah. I mean, I think like so much of this work is all I can. Like, the world outside of us is unpredictable. And how am I going to, like, rise to meet that, whatever that is? And I think like this this whole pandemic is such an opportunity for that work. And not in a, I don't mean like it's so great it happened, we have this opportunity. But just like this is a real confrontation with what is, right? Things changing very fast in a way that triggers a lot of thought patterns for all of us.

And there's no arguing with it and there's no escaping it. So, like, we either have to choose to, like, show up and do the work of how am I going to just like you're saying, like have my own back, have my own grounding so I can like surf these waves or am I just going to let them, like, wash over me, pummel me, push my face in the sand? This is the opportunity. Totally. What would you say to someone who is where you started? Like it's a year ago. They're having all those thoughts and feelings you had a year ago, what would be your message to them?

Marissa: I mean, probably a couple of things like one, it's completely OK that you are where you are, it doesn't mean anything about you or your worth or what you should or shouldn't be doing. Like where you are is where you need to be. So that would be, you know, the first thing. And then if you feel like you want support or want to change things or explore your emotions or your thoughts. I would say just pull off the band-aid and join The Clutch. I mean, even if you have concerns about the costs or not knowing exactly what it be like, I would say it's so worth it. And then throughout your journey, you know, just be kind to yourself and know that where you are is exactly where you need to be. And that will continue throughout the future.

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Kara: It's just like feelings where you have to allow a feeling before you can change it. Right. It's like we're all trying to change from this place. I have to get away from where I am because it's bad and I'm not good enough and I have to get better. And that never works. I love that. Right where you are is totally fine. And you don't have to change if you want to. That's what this work will do. But it's always up to you.

Marissa: Exactly, if you want the help, if you want to change, The Clutch, really will help, but that's still a decision for that person to make.

Kara: Anything else that you want to share? That I haven't asked about.

Marissa: I think the only thing is like these tools, even though I've used them mostly on dating and some other stuff. They can apply to anything. I've definitely used them on random one offs on certain things that pop up. I mean really you can use them on anything and it really helps you kind of make decisions to basically take control of your emotional resiliency in your life and what results you create in your life.

Kara: Yeah, that's the goal. That's what we're all here doing. All right. Thank you so much for sharing that. I think it's going to be really helpful and inspiring to a lot of the other chickens, so thank you for sharing your story with us.

Marissa: Thanks Kara.

Kara: Hi, Deb. Can you introduce yourself and tell folks a little bit about you?

Deb: Sure. My name's Deb Malkin and I am a massage therapist and exercise specialist. And I live in Oakland, California, though, currently sheltering in place in Florida.

Kara: So tell us a little bit. I've been asking everybody, what brought you to join The Clutch? Was there something in particular you were struggling with or what kind of brought you to that decision?

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Deb: I joined The Clutch after a big breakup, so I had a breakup of my primary romantic relationship with my girlfriend of eight years and like in July before The Clutch started. But I was a big fan of yours and listening to the podcast and like was really needing some sanity. After that experience, I was in therapy. I was doing kind of all the things to figure out how to... What felt like putting my life back together. And I saw a lot of patterns that things that I was doing, but I didn't know how to stop doing...

Kara: That's always the key right?

Deb: For being like a healer and wanting to help people, I was extraordinarily mean.

Kara: You're like, not me and I'm not going to heal myself, just other people.

Deb: I was the exception to all the rules, only if I can make everybody else feel better, that's when I'm allowed. There's a lot of people pleasing, there was a lot of perfectionism. There's just a lot of like stuff to untangle. And then there's this like beautiful construct called the model which synthesizes, all of these different kinds of ideas. And then finally then I was able to like step out of myself and like, look at, I don't know, just everything I believe in a way that was like very healing, healing of my like, kind of compulsive shame and blame stories. And it really allowed me to find a lot of peace after my breakup.

Kara: So I'm curious, tell me if anything, if anything, surprised you and your kind of time in The Clutch, in your journey like did you learn something unexpected through being coached to this work or something that surprised you?

Deb: I think I might have touched on this, one of the things, I mean, one thing that surprised me is how much of a liar my brain is and that that's actually not about me as a person. Learning about the brain has been so

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helpful in like almost allowing myself to be human, like not only being allowed to be human if I was like, perfect.

Kara: A little contradictory there, allowed to be a human if I'm perfect, which no human ever is...

Deb: Exactly. It's like an amazing, Catch-22. Be able to see my brain and understand cognitive bias and understand kind of like it's not that I don't trust myself. Right. It is just about kind of the thoughts are not true. Right. It's such an interesting, I mean, it's just like it is really the answer to life, because I think I just walked around forever thinking all kinds of unhelpful thoughts.

Kara: Totally, like it must be true. Why would I think if it weren't true?

Deb: It sounds like you can use these tools and you can learn them, they're not automatic. But the process of learning is also very exciting because that really teaches me that one, like I'm not a finished being, that there is always room for growth and change, and the way I view the body and the way I view like the brain now, with the idea of neuroplasticity and the way that the body holds these like self-regulating and self-healing processes is that of course nothing is fixed, that is all changeable, that healing is possible inside of us. So it's a very exciting kind of world view to have. And this work has really like solidified it for me. And it's exciting to be like 50 years old and to be learning this. Right. So it's like it may be not exciting at the end of the world in a pandemic, that's a little dramatic.

Kara: Well, let's talk about that, because I'm curious to hear, how has, because we are in the middle, these are being recorded in the midst of the pandemic, I have been asking everyone, how do you feel like the tools have been able to help or support you or how do you feel like your experience of this has been changed by having done a year of this kind of thought work?

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Deb: Well, for me, I'm in a situation in which I came to Florida to take care of my dad after he fell and broke his hip and had surgery. He's 93 years old. So the first two weeks of March were kind of dramatic and intense for me and for him and he's on the mend, he's getting great care. And that's a good thing. And, you know, you could feel the wave of the COVID-19 coming in the hospital. And so there was a lot of thought work around, you know, being in the moment and having my own back and so after spending like 24, 36 hours in the hospital and dealing with a lot like dealing with a very frightened human being. I could feel that I would want to have like a giant temper tantrum and fall apart.

And I was driving home from the hospital. And so I could like feel this impulse rise up just like a very old familiar impulse. I'm like, that's OK. And then the other part of my brain was like, yeah, we're not doing that. And it wasn't like a shaming. It was just a sense of calm. And like, just going to take this every day. It's interesting and like seeing all my old patterns going through some of them, being okay with that, creating more space and like really literally thinking, how do I want to feel, like how do I want to think and feel at the end of this experience and how do I want to do that? Like, how do I want to greet every day?

Kara: So in terms of all of this work that you have done, I'm curious because we have so many different ways of working together through The Clutch, there's so many different like resources, different learning styles. So I'm just curious, what for you do you think has been the most helpful? Like what have you enjoyed the most or found the most helpful out of the different ways of interacting in the group?

Deb: I think The Clutch, like sometimes it's like coming and doing my thought work and like doing model on my own and then coming in and being like, "hey, everybody, take a look at this, like what am I missing? What am I not seeing? And also just the camaraderie sometimes of like

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having a place where you go online, you interact with people who are not just like, freaking out but they are fully in their humanness, in their process, but they're not like, you know, being like "everything's going to be okay."

Kara: Like Pollyanna, like, let's just all have high fives and not talk about it. Yeah.

Deb: Like positivity culture, positive vibes only for whatever. But also, you're not having people in there telling you what you should think or what you should believe or what you should be angry about or what you shouldn't be angry about.

It is very comforting just to show up and witness somebody else's process. I love your coaching. Like I love getting to watch you, coach. Another thing that I love about The Clutch, is the diversity of voices. Certainly, it's a feminist mindset revolution, right? It's not like we have this, we all agree I suppose on what feminism, well, maybe we don't...

Kara: I'm sure we don't, there's probably a million definitions in there. We don't have a literal...

Deb: I bet that we agree that women are people.

Kara: Yes, of course.

Deb: And as like a queer, unrepentant, fat, active - as you know, like there's not a lot of places that I feel like are kind of built for me. And so what I love is the diversity of people who are participating in The Clutch like women and non-binary folks who are looking for like solidarity and also a sense of seeing themselves. So it's been really helpful to be in a space that really like fosters and values different kinds of diversity. I don't think that I would have thought working with a life coach was going to be like my jam at all.

Kara: And there's - because there's for me, like one of the reasons it was so important was that there's so few spaces that share some, I think of it as

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like a big spectrum or set of Venn diagrams probably, you know, like where people are in different political or feminist issues. But there's plenty of feminist or fat activist or whatever groups they mostly, in my experience, are structured around. I mean, it's such a funny thing, right? A marginalization is a shared identity that's based around marginalization.

But I find most of the spaces online, it's just 95%, that's what the focus says is it's like all of the ways that we are being oppressed. And so to me, that's just always felt it's not that that's not important. It's just unsatisfying as the whole conversation. I've been thinking about this a lot as we've been going through the pandemic. Like I've always just been very pragmatic. So I think just as a thinker, and so I'm sort of like, yes, all that is true, we do need to change that stuff. But I'm still alive right now in this world. And like, what are my tools for making my life experience better? Because probably we're not going to solve all that before I die. And I don't want to spend the next 50 years just being like, well, life would have been better if we had. That's it. I think like that is so special to The Clutch.

Deb: And also, I think like even around the ideas of fatness. Right. So I do feel like, you know, in The Clutch, different people have different ideas about their own body. But I do feel like it is a space in which, you know, you kind of set this ground rule in which like, I am a fat person who doesn't hate my body, which is a revolutionary idea.

And for some of us who've held that idea and lived through that idea for, you know, now for myself for like two decades, it's still not something I see kind of filtered throughout the world. So it's fun to watch women like embody that idea for themselves. And it doesn't have to look the way it looks like for me. And also, it's still an area in which both I am looking for solidarity, but I'm not now taking other people's thoughts about their bodies have nothing to do with it...

Kara: Because without that, there's no space for learning. Right. That's what I love about The Clutch is like you're allowed to come in there and talk

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about trying to use thought work to lose weight and people are going to challenge you on different parts of it. Like the part of the problem I find with a lot of those activism circles is the fragility of like if anybody is talking about this, then I can't feel okay about myself. How the fuck is anybody supposed to learn that way then? Right. And I'm not trying to say everybody else should be educators, but I'm a coach, so it is my job. I want people to be able to learn and grow and like not be at the perfect place yet. And if no one's ever allowed to talk about that struggle because they cause everybody else's feelings, then there's no way for them to grow or progress.

Deb: And also, as a movement. There's a certain way in which we trigger warnings and we're trying to manage other people's feelings all the time that we actually, I think the idea that you create and control other people's feelings reinforces that fragility.

Kara: Yeah. And then we spend all of our energy trying to control each other as opposed to like what if we were like everybody is allowed to have the thoughts they want; let's all go storm the capital. It's just like let's go like direct that energy towards whatever social structural change we want to make rather than, like policing each other constantly.

Deb: And I think it comes from a caring place.

Kara: Totally, and from not knowing that other people don't create your feelings. I mean, most people don't know that. So of course, they think that, yeah, it's not at all like a criticism of people. All of this is a natural consequence of believing other people cause my feelings. It's no different to your personal life.

Deb: Absolutely. I was just reading an article about social justice spaces and hyper vigilant and the brain and how we in our work to try to make the world a better place, we can actually reinforce that hyper vigilance of that other people as a threat story line when we're also trying to make the world

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better. And so it's like we're like installing our own triggers in our cells as we are trying to work together to make change.

Kara: That just makes me think, because I've been talking so much in the pandemic work about how like if you just focus on fear, you'll never be able to control the circumstances enough to not be afraid. Right. So you'll start out being like, well, I'm just going to sanitize the groceries when they come in. And it's of course, not about the action line. I sanitize my groceries now. Right. But it's how you're thinking and feeling about it. Like what happens when people fixate on fear and live from there, is that they try to control more and more of the world. But then what happens is you don't feel safer. Your vigilance just gets focused on smaller and smaller threats. Right.

And so that's how you can go from like participating in the world to then being at home, being like maybe have to block off the vents because what if somebody next door breathes and it gets in right. And the same thing, I think, with the trying to control the way other people are, it's like, OK, if you can get everybody to never say these ten trigger words, then you're going to start looking for like, just because you've trained your brain to do this. Right. Then it's looking for even smaller things. Is that the hint of an implication that maybe a body shouldn't be that size...?

It's like you're going from like you've policed the major stuff, and then you think you'll feel safe and good, but you won't. All you've done is teach your brain to scan constantly for threats. And then it's just going to find smaller and smaller slights or smaller and smaller indications or hints of something you don't want somebody to think or say like, so it's just a never-ending cycle. We're never going to get to safety and the emotional safety and autonomy from working that way.

Deb: And it makes it impossible to build coalitions and to work together. Because when you don't have your own sense of like unshakable or even moderately unshakable foundation or the skills to like validate your own human experience, the fact that you are worthy and you are deserving of

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being alive just as much as another human being. If that's not like a foundational part of your self story, then you're always going to be looking for that from other people...

Kara: And you'll be constantly thinking that you aren't those things and you'll see that and everyone else. Right. And then that creates so much infighting and so much kind of finger pointing within, yeah, the coalition are trying to build, that is never going to come together.

Deb: And then people bounce and whatever. There's lots of extra drama.

Kara: So much drama. Yeah. So I'm glad we talked about that.

Deb: I'm glad, I think because there's a lot of people, I know for myself, we want things to change and be better. And then we're suffering on the inside because we're hurting so much.

Kara: Right and we have to solve that. Right. This is like I mean, it's true for fat activism. I talk about in sexism all the time like we can pass a law that everybody gets paid the same amount starting out. But if all the people socialize as women think, they're not good enough and don't deserve it and all the people socialize as men think they deserve more, we're very quickly just going to perpetuate to recreate the same arc, the same result. Right. Because the thoughts haven't changed.

So same thing, we can get like everybody to be fat, positive and everybody to whatever the way they talk in the media and everything. But those of us still alive, at least with these thoughts from the beginning, are still going to be thinking them. Right. We have to do that internal work, too. Or the external work, isn't, it's both right they are intimately connected. But we just are constantly focused on the external because that's how humans are. Let me change my circumstance and then I will feel better.

Let me just make all these people stop saying things I don't like and then I will feel better. It doesn't matter, but that's never the way it works. And we can't envision as I don't believe we're as creative in our revolutionary

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liberatory work, if we've internalized all those thoughts right, we have to clean that up so we can really envision something different.

Deb: And on your podcast about being an ally also as one, then I come back to over and over and over again because that's that same sense of like if my sense of, my values are like I want to, you know, help eradicate racism. And then, you know, as a white person, like, I need people to look at me or see me as not racist.

Kara: Right.

Deb: You know, that's going to make me want to control what people think about me. And that gets in the way of actually listening to people who are not white.

Kara: Right. Totally. It becomes about you and your ego as opposed to the change you want to create. Yeah, 100%. Yeah, good. So what would you say to someone who is where you started a year ago?

Deb: This is the best time and money investment that you can make that like learning why you do what you do and why you think what you think, like what your own operating manual is will make your whole life better. We're always going to be living in a time where there's strife and equity problems, big problems, little problems. Maybe for this sometime, you know, some people's problems were I don't know how to go to bed at a certain time, you know, we all still have the same problems we brought into this giant shit show with each other. And also, I was even thinking about how useful this is going towards an election. And just like how grateful I was thinking I'm going to be as we get towards this election, now it's going to be even more of an intense idea, having this place to help me manage my thoughts.

Kara: Truly for anything that comes up. Thank you for sharing your experience with us.

Deb: You're welcome, thank you for asking me, I appreciate you and your work Kara.

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Kara: How amazing was that conversation? How amazing are Deb and Marissa? It is such a fun part of my job to get to know my students and just be in awe of the ways in which they are able to take this work and apply it to their own lives. You know, it's almost like teaching someone how to cook, it's like you teach them the basic tools, then they come up with the most amazing recipes and dishes and techniques and the flavors and everything based on their own lives. And my students are always coming up with these incredible insights and growth that just surprise me and blow my own mind.

And I learned so much from them and from watching their work. It's always such, such a gift. So I know that so many of you who listen to the podcast in particular struggle with feeling happy and fulfilled in your romantic relationships, whether that's dating, if you're single and you're looking for a partner and finding that really difficult and finding like, feeling like there aren't enough people who are good fits for you or, you know, things start out strong and tend to lose interest or it's hard to even get a date.

I know a lot of you are in that camp and then a lot of you are in relationships but are really still anxious and preoccupied or are unhappy in your relationship, don't like the way that your partner treats you or don't like the way you feel in the relationship. And then some of you are dealing with breakups, whether, you know, initiated by yourself or initiated by the other person, but still struggling with a lot of those feelings of hopelessness and wondering about your self-worth and your love ability and being afraid you'll never find anyone again.

Love and dating is one of the most challenging areas, I think, for a lot of us. And it's interesting. There is really an overlap, I think, between that and the social justice work like in both cases. There's so much conversation out there about how terrible things are, right, how terrible dating is, how hard marriage is, how, you know, especially if you're a straight woman, who dates men. How like men are the problem in all relationships.

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There's just like so much social chatter in the social justice world about everything that's wrong in the world. And I think it's understandably really difficult when you're just you and you just have your brain. And that's all you're hearing from all around you to feel hopeful or to feel optimistic or to feel enthusiastic or to feel inspired whether you're trying to change the world or you're just trying to change your love life, both of which are important. And so I love that these two conversations kind of took place in conjunction with each other, because I think they're really, they're similar. But what I love about the work that Deb and Marissa have done and what I know the work I know is possible for you to do as well if you're listening to this, is that there is a way to change those thoughts.

Even though everybody around you might be validating your negative thoughts. It doesn't mean you have to jump on that train. And that is one of the things that I love about The Clutch and having that community is that you have a community of people who are actually trying to change their thoughts. But like Deb and I talked about, it's not this kind of like what people call toxic positivity. I don't personally use the word toxic, but it's not this. Like, "Just look on the bright side, hi fives only right?"

It's not that, it's like a community of people who are honestly engaging with challenging patterns and showing up authentically, but with the common belief that it's possible to change the way you think and it's possible to change your own life. That's what I think is missing from so much of the mainstream conversation about dating, which is sort of like, well, it's just a shit show and luck and you just have to hope you find someone not terrible. Right. Which is like so disempowering.

It's not at all true. It's about changing you and how you show up and then you get different results. And the same with the social justice world. Everything is terrible and you know, that's it. Unless we can change everything all at once, we're screwed. Well, no. Like, yes, we want to work on that political change. But just sitting around constantly talking about how terrible things are is not helping any of us envision a better future or get

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anything done. So having a community of people who are like fully acknowledging that life is positive and negative emotion and that we have these negative thoughts around us and are being fed these thoughts that that's real, but that also they can be changed.

They have to be changed if we want to create new results. And really focused on what can we control. How can we change how we show up to get a different result? Because that's all we can change. Having a community of people who believe that that's possible and are examples of that being possible for you I think is so important at the beginning of your thought work journey. You know, I was going through coach certification, so I had my fellow coaches, but there really wasn't a place like The Clutch, which is why I created it for people to come and have those examples and have that community and have that support.

It's like being on a sports team. It's you know, it's like there's more experienced people who know more and can help you and can teach you and guide you, and you have that sense of community, you're all in it together, but you also can learn from them and their example. That's really what I think is magic about The Clutch and especially the community. And I just love that Deb and Marissa and some of my other students like that are in there to really show you guys the way and inspire you and kind of help light you on fire.

And of course, I'm in there, too. And, you know, one of my purposes in life is to show all of you what is possible when you change your thoughts and when you embrace thought work. But I also know how powerful it is to see people who are not me, who are not your teacher, who are not your podcaster or whatever. Right. People who you can maybe identify with because they've got similar backgrounds or similar styles or similar issues or whatever it is.

And so I love having that kind of community at all different stages. It's so fun. All right. So this week, because of our anniversary, we are offering this

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special bonus that I think will be super helpful if you join right now. We have put together a podcast roadmap. Of course, if you're listening to this, you're a podcast listener, and that's where you get a lot of your thought work so far. And in The Clutch, we really break it down for you and teach you how to do what I talk about on the podcast all the time and how to kind of go through each step in writing and really understand how to use the building blocks.

And so for this week, we also have the special podcast roadmap where we've put together a kind of curation of the podcast episodes that best support and supplement the self-coaching course that you take when you join The Clutch your first five weeks, you learn how to coach yourself. And we've kind of put together the best of the podcast that will help you with each of those weeks to really take the lessons deeper.

It's not mandatory. You can get amazing benefit just from doing the course on its own, but it's such a great way to really like immerse yourself, like if you think about a language immersion, like you go stay somewhere for a week or two, your skills develop so much more dramatically. So having that kind of additional resource, additional support, really exposing your brain to the ideas more and more really helps them sink in.

So that is the podcast roadmap that's available when you join The Clutch this week in honor of our one year birthday so you can sign up at www.Unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch and you'll automatically get that bonus podcast roadmap if you join this this week or you can text + 1 (347) 934-8861, and just send us your email address. And then you will get a link to sign up to all the information, and when you sign up, you'll get that bonus podcast roadmap.

Alright. I cannot wait to see you in there. Deb and Marissa and Elizabeth and Bessie cannot wait to see you in there. All my other students are waiting for you too to come join us and learn how to blow your own mind.

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It's truly the most fun thing in the world to change in ways you never thought were possible or even could have guessed. I'll see you there.

If you're loving what you're learning in the podcast, you have got to come check out The Clutch. The Clutch is my feminist coaching community for all things Unfuck Your Brain. It's where you can get individual help applying all these concepts I teach to your own life and learning how to do thought work to blow your own mind.

It's where you can learn new coaching tools not shared on the podcast that will change your life even more. It's where you can hang out and connect over all things thought work with other podcast chickens just like you and me. It's my favorite place on earth and it will change everything, I guarantee it.

Come join us at www.unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch. Or you can just text your email address to 347-934-8861. If you text your email address to that number, we'll text you right back with a link to check out everything you need to know about The Clutch. 347-934-8861 or again, just go online to www.unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch. I cannot wait to see you there.