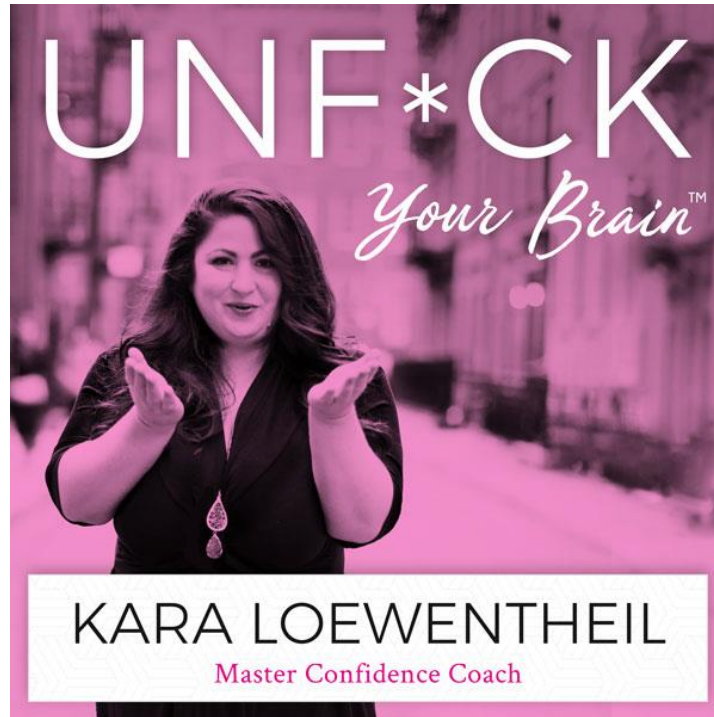


UFYB 138: Let's Talk About Sex Vol 1



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. How are you guys? I am amazing. I have been doing so much work on the Clutch College Online Body Image Breakthrough class that I am offering inside the Clutch. It's been just such a powerful reminder to me of how I think women are given this catch-22 of, your appearance matters so much. Your weight matters so much. You should always look young and unwrinkled and unblemished and have proportions that don't make sense together. You should.

And there's so much pressure on it, but then of course, the minute that a woman cares about her appearance, she's vain and shallow. And it's such a mind fuck. And I think it makes it hard for women to even acknowledge how much they are obsessing and fixated about their weight and their looks and their relationship to their body. Because, it's uncool now to admit it. Everybody wants to be body positive. Nobody wants to be that woman who thinks she should be thin, but it's still so ingrained. And the truth is, it's the opposite of trivial.

That's what has been really landing for me so powerfully as I have been creating this course and creating all of these new tools and advanced materials and thinking about why this work is so important. It's the opposite of trivial. It's the opposite of shallow. The amount of time that women spend thinking about their cellulite and their wrinkles and their gray hair and their whatever. And the truth is of course that women who have none of those things hate their bodies too. It's never about the thing. You can always find something.

But it's just the amount of time that women spend thinking about their weight and their exercise and what they ate and what they shouldn't eat. If

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they've been good, if they've been bad. All of that stuff is just like a hole in the bucket. It's just such a huge drain on women's time and energy and money and focus and ambition.

And when I think about it, the reason this work is so important, yes, it's to help individual women with their suffering. Because it is suffering. I was in so much suffering about my body when that's where I was in my life. So much so, of course, relieving my students' and my clients' suffering. Teach them how to relieve their own suffering really, is always my mission, is so important.

But also, what would the world be like if tomorrow women forever stopped worrying about any of that stuff? How much mental energy and focus and drive and willingness to be seen and put themselves out there. How many women aren't pursuing their dreams because they don't think they look the part, or they don't want anyone to see them when they don't think they look good enough? Or they think they're not confident enough because they just need to lose weight.

To me, that is what is heartbreaking about it. And that's what is so powerful about liberating yourself from the tyranny of obsession with your body and how it looks, and its size and shape and what you did with it today or didn't do with it today. That, to me, is everything. It's so powerful.

So, one of the things that comes up, of course, this is a segue to today's topic, when we're talking about body image is, sex. Because for obvious reason, your body is very involved in sex. And if you are socialized as a woman in this society, even if your sexual orientation turns out to not include men, you've still been socialized under heteronormative expectations in society. Meaning, the assumption that people are heterosexual and that women want to appeal to men. And so we've been taught that all of this body obsession and grooming and regulation and discipline that women are supposed to do is to make our bodies sexually appealing to men.

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And so, once sex is involved, it comes out a lot. All of this body image stuff comes up so much in sex, in our comfort around sex, in our relationship to our bodies as sexual bodies. How we relate to sex and sexuality is so connected to body image. So that's why I'm going to be doing this two-part series on sex. We're going to talk about all things sexual. Your sexuality. Your relationship to your sexuality. How to have better sex. How thought work relates to sex, all of it. So, we're going to dive into a couple of the issues and areas today, and then we're going to finish it up with the next episode next week. All right. Let's get started.

So, if you've ever heard that the brain is the biggest sex organ, I'm here to tell you that is 100% true. Not just literal size-wise, but in terms of the impact that our thoughts have on our experience of sexuality and desire.

Just like hunger or pain or many other physical experiences, there's a physiological basis to sexuality that probably does precede our thoughts. But our thoughts also have a huge impact on our experience. And most of us have not done much work on teasing that all out because we just assume that desire is something that happens to us that is entirely hormonal or physical and that we can't do anything about.

But the opposite is true. Our thoughts have an enormous impact on our experience of sexuality and desire. They impact how we experience ourselves as sexual beings or not, they impact how we experience attraction and desire, they impact how we feel about other people's desire for us, they impact how we experience sexual pleasure or lack of sexual pleasure.

So it's crucial to understand our thoughts about sex, sexuality, attraction, and desire, to understand how they impact us in our experience and how we can change our experience of sexuality to some extent if we want. So

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let's start with how we're socialized to think about and experience sex because that is a big part of the puzzle.

If you were raised or socialized as a woman, broadly speaking, you are socialized to think about yourself as an object of desire. And that's in contrast to men, who are socialized to think of themselves as the subject who acts out the desire.

So, men are taught to think about who they desire and then to go try to get that person to have sex with them, if other conditions allow. And women are taught to think about who desires them. And then to decide if they'll have sex with them or not. That's the stereotype, that men are the aggressors and women are the receivers.

And this impacts the way we think about sex subconsciously because it leads women to think more about whether they are sexually desirable to other people, especially if they're straight and they want to appeal to men, more than what they desire themselves. So that means that number one, you focus your brain power on worrying about being attractive and making sure that potential partners are attracted to you, rather than whether you're attracted to or interested in your potential partners.

And number two, it means that your whole experience of desire is constructed around being desired. I think you rarely hear men say something like, "Well, I just can't get in the mood if my partner isn't initiating and showing that she desires me and making me feel sexy." I'm not saying that never happens, but it's certainly less common.

But you hear women say this all the time, that they don't feel sexy because of what their partner is or isn't doing or saying. So you see what I'm saying? Because men are socialized to think that they are the originators of

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desire and that desire arises in them just from seeing someone else and they then act it out.

The other person is there as a prompt to their desire just by existing, not by having desire of her own. But for women, we're socialized to experience someone else desiring us as what is arousing. So we make our own arousal and sexuality dependent on whether someone else desires us and acts or communicates that to us in a particular way.

So I'm calling it socialization, you can also just call it the ways we're taught to think, but that means we can learn how to change our thinking as well, thank goodness. So for instance, if you have a partner and your thought is, "They aren't making me feel sexy," that's a good clue to you that you have this thought pattern and need to work on it.

Because the truth is that no one else can make you feel sexy or sexual. Your own thoughts do that. It's the same as wanting someone else to say or act a certain way to make you feel happy or proud or loved or anything else. Feeling sexy or desirable isn't any different.

So you have to get to know your brain and what it is you want to be able to believe. If your partner acted exactly the way you want to "make you feel sexy," or a random person on the street did it, or a person across the bar, whoever it is in specific or general you think needs to act a certain way to make you feel sexy, if they acted that way, what would you be thinking?

And notice if those thoughts revolve around you being desirable to other people. Because again, people socialized as men spend a lot more time thinking about what they find sexy in others, and people socialized as women spend a lot more time thinking about whether they are desirable to other people.

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So, if you want to feel desirable and sexy regardless of how other people around you are acting, you have to divorce your idea of your own sexuality from being something that exists to arouse other people. And you have to practice reframing your sexuality as something that exists for you.

Your body's ability to experience sexual pleasure, for those of you who want to do that, is as innately yours to enjoy as your ability to taste delicious food or appreciate the beauty of a flower. It's a sensory pleasure that happens in your body. It's not something that depends on someone else to see you or think any particular way about you.

That's why connecting to your sexuality in this way is the first step to improving your sex life. We can talk about using thought work to improve your experience of sex and your relationship with your sexual partners, and I'm going to talk about that in the second volume of this two-volume episodes, mini-series, whatever you want to call it.

But before you can get into changing those thoughts, you have to start with the basic relationship you have to your sexuality and to uncover the thoughts that are creating that. And if you're socialized as a woman, it's a good bet that your unconscious premises about your sexuality are focused on being the object of desire, the thing that is looked at, the thing that is wanted, as opposed to the person who does the wanting.

So, one of the most effective techniques I've found to try to bridge that gap is to practice being both of those things at the same time. So rather than focusing on whether other people are attracted to you, focus on being attracted to yourself.

It's a little bit of a funny way to approach it but I find it helps bridge the disconnect between being so used to thinking of yourself as an object to be

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desired. It gives you a way into the experience of embodying your own desire. How can you see yourself as desirable in your own gaze?

Letting your brain break about that a little bit will often bring up a lot of body image thoughts you have. That's kind of one of the first things that comes up. Mostly negative thoughts. And that's okay. Body image work and sexuality work are often very connected. It's totally normal.

But I want to encourage you in addition to thought work to do a little bit more embodiment work on this. So we spend a lot of time talking about our brains on this podcast, but this week, I want you to practice being in your body, calling up a feeling of your own sexuality or sensuality for your own benefit.

And you can take this as slow as you like, depending on your sexual history, this is going to feel more or less accessible and maybe more or less safe to start out. But that's what I like about this practice is you don't need to involve anyone else in it and you can prepare to take it really slow and you can go in with a thought to practice if you start to have a strong emotion come up, which is totally fine. It's okay to have strong emotions come up.

I think we get very alienated from our bodies, especially as women, and so being in our bodies can bring up a lot of strong thoughts and feelings, and that's okay. You can practice a kind of supportive thought like, "I'm safe, I can stop any time I want. This is just an emotion. It's not dangerous."

So just know that if you start to try to get into your body, and I'm going to give you a few ways to do that, you may experience some strong emotion, and that's totally okay. You can allow it, start to look at the thoughts that bring it up, get to know it a little bit.

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However you want to approach it, I want you to try to be a little loose and experimental with it. And I know that's hard for my perfectionist chickens who want to do everything right. So what I want you to focus on is bringing up a feeling of however you would describe it, of arousal, of desirability, of sexiness, of sensuality. Bringing up that sensation in your body.

So there are a couple of different ways to do that. You can think about a time that you felt very sexy or desirable and notice what that feeling is like in your body. For me, it's a kind of warm and rising sensation. It might be different for you. Notice what thought you're thinking to bring that up.

If you're very used to only feeling sexy or desirable in response to someone's desire, you can think about someone that you've been intimate with and imagine how they looked at you. Again, we're just sort of bringing up that memory to try to access it. And then notice, what are you thinking and feeling in your body when you call up that memory?

So you can also try imagining a hypothetical sexy scenario that you make up, a fantasy. You can try dancing to music. I find moving your hips in particular. You can take some time to touch yourself sexually or not. You can even just touch a part of your body that isn't an erogenous zone but touch it with intention and in a way that feels good.

You can practice seeing yourself in your mind's eye the way someone you desire you would see you. This may be weird or uncomfortable and that's okay. We're just experimenting. There's no right or wrong to this, but I want you to practice calling up a sexual energy that you are not producing to please someone else or in response to someone else desiring you.

I want you to practice connecting to a sexual energy that is just about the pleasure of your own embodiment because we have to start there. I can and will in the next episode teach you about changing your thoughts to

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create more desire for your partner and to create more satisfying sexual experiences with a partner.

But we have to start with your sexuality as it exists for you alone, especially because we will all go through periods of life where we are not partnered or where we're with a partner with whom we're not having a lot of physical intimacy. And so, having that relationship with yourself as your primary and first and most important sexual and sensual relationship is so important, just like it's your primary emotional relationship needs to be with yourself.

We all absorb a lot of thoughts about sex and sexuality, and many of them are subconscious. So, this is a learning experience on all levels and that is okay. We're just going to unlock that pandora's box a little bit.

If you're in The Clutch, it's a great thing to come post any thoughts you notice coming up in the Facebook group or submit to ask the coaches for any coaching you want. And if you're not in The Clutch and you've been thinking about joining, now is a great time because sex is not frivolous just because there's a pandemic happening.

I actually think your sexual energy and your sexual self are an incredible source of vibrancy and pleasure that you don't need anything else to access, and that's only more necessary right now. So, I would love to coach you on this work to make your sex life better now and always, alone or with a partner.

And if you want help with that, you can come join us at unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch, or text your email address to +1347-934-8861. +1347-934-8861, and we will send you a link to all the info.

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And either way, I will see you back here next week for volume two where we will talk about using thought work to create more desire and to create more physical pleasure. It's going to be a fun time. I'll see you guys then.

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, "Well, I don't know how to get started with thought work 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 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, or you can actually just text your email address 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.