

TW & Anti-Racism Resources + Free Coaching Call



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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Hello my chickens. This has been a very painful and intense time for many of us with the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis police and the protests and the police violence and brutality and everything that has come along with that in the last couple of weeks. Not to mention the last several hundred years of this country.

So I wanted to do this bonus episode to talk a little bit about what I think the role of thought work is in moments like this and in social change generally because I think there's a lot of silence about this and structural issues in the coaching community, which is one of the reasons that I try to be vocal about it.

And I also want to point you to some existing resources and tell you about a free coaching call I'm going to do later this week as well. So I'm going to do those things in order. I'm going to teach you a little bit, I'm going to point you to some existing resources, at the end I'm going to tell you about the free coaching call just so that you don't have to try to remember the details of the call at the end when you want to register.

Okay, so here's the first thing to know. The point of thought work is not to feel awesome all the time. It's not to "get to neutral" all the time. It's not about any other attempt to flatten the human experience or deny our full humanity.

Sometimes we are so afraid of our feelings or find them so overwhelming that I think that we turn to thought work as a way to not have to feel or suffer, or we think that's what we can use it for. That doesn't work and that's not the point of it to me. To me, thought work is a tool that we use to navigate the experience of being human in a world that is not always the way that we want it to be.

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You will have noticed that I don't teach about keeping your vibes high and I don't teach about the universe having a plan for you. I don't teach about the universe having your highest good. I don't personally believe in that kind of divine intention. If you do and that thought works for you, that's great. I'm not saying you're wrong.

But I just think that it's important to really clarify that for me, I come from a different perspective, which is - I grew up Jewish, and in Judaism, there's a concept called tikkun olam, which means that the world - I might cry on this podcast. It means that the world is broken and that it is our job as humans to try to put it back together.

It is our job to try to show up and make the world a better place. So I don't believe that thought work is about believing that there's nothing in the world that can change. It is a delicate balance because I teach a lot about accepting what is. I'm talking about emotionally accepting what is in the sense of not spending my emotional energy resisting that the world is the way it is and telling myself it should already be different.

I have not articulated it that way before, but I think that might be a really important distinction. There's a difference between I want the world to be better in the future and here's how I'm going to work on that and the emotional belief the world should already be better and different. That can be so painful.

But part of what I'm saying here is it's okay if that's your belief and it's painful and you may not want to change that, and that's also okay. Thought work is not about feeling awesome all the time. Thought work is not about flattening our experience on a personal level, on a political level, on any level.

To me, thought work is about how do I become more resilient and more skillful at being a human being who has a lot of thoughts and feelings when

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the world doesn't cooperate with how I want it to be. That doesn't mean that I use it to not take action to try to change the world. It means that I use it to try to develop and increase my own emotional resilience so that I have more to offer to the world.

But I'm not always there in every minute and you don't have to be either. Allowing whatever emotion we're having, even when it's painful, even when it seems overwhelming always has to come first, whether our emotion is about our personal life or what's happening in the world, it doesn't matter in the sense that if we try to resist it to try to get away from it, it will only persist and get more intense.

We always have to try to allow and process it. That's always the first and most important step. And then we get to choose if we want to keep the feelings we have. And sometimes we do. Sometimes we want to feel grief. Sometimes we want to feel pain. Sometimes we want to feel anger.

There's no right or wrong feeling to have. Feelings are just different sensations in our bodies that produce different actions. They are windows into our thinking. And thought work I think can be crucial in helping us identify what am I feeling, how can I allow this feeling, what thought is creating this feeling, do I want to keep that thought, do I want to keep having this feeling, do I like the results that I'm getting.

This is a very individualized process. For some people, feeling anger might be motivating and useful, and they might take actions they really want to take and feel good about and get results that they like. For some people, feeling angry just leads to paralysis and burnout and face first into a bottle of wine at the end of the night and that doesn't create results they want.

It's so individual and you can't know theoretically. I can't answer for you what you should feel or what's the useful emotion. You always have to check it in your own body, look at your own thought-feeling-action-result

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cycle. You always have to look at when I think this way and I feel this way, what do I actually do next?

Make sure that what you are doing matches what you think the thought and feeling would make you do. Sometimes we have an idea about what a feeling does for us that it doesn't actually do, and so we need to check it. But there's no universal rule about this.

Thought work is a tool for individual liberation that can help us contribute to social change. To me, it is a liberation practice. Oppression doesn't just impact our bodies. It impacts our minds. Undoing that work and deciding what we want to believe about ourselves and our potential and the world is where any revolution has to start.

Now, this part that I'm about to say is really for the white people listening to this. If you are a white person who thinks that you are not racist, thought work is a very important lens for becoming aware of the ways that you are. If you are having a very defensive feeling when I say that, I want you to try to stay with me.

If you trust and believe me when I tell you that you have absorbed negative messages from society about being a woman or about how you look or about making money, then believe me when I say that you have absorbed negative messages from society about blackness and brownness, and you have absorbed positive messages from society about whiteness. They are all related.

Thought work is an incredible tool for learning how to be curious about these thoughts. And I think it's understandable to have the belief and the thought that white people should feel guilty and ashamed about their complicity and white supremacy, and we all get to choose that thought if we want it.

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What I have seen and experienced as a coach is that most people try to avoid their thoughts when they feel guilt and shame about them, and I am really a pragmatist, and so I think we get less change in the world when that's how we're thinking about our own thoughts.

And I think that if guilt and shame motivated positive, productive action, that would be one thing. But you all know that I have taught consistently throughout my time as a coach and in this podcast that guilt and shame for most people don't motivate productive change and lasting transformation.

And so given that, they are actually just a complete waste of energy and they don't do anyone any good. And they don't help you show up in a different way and they don't help you change the world and they are just - they really become just sort of indulgent feelings that don't move the needle.

So I think using thought work to be curious about our own thinking, rather than judging it is what enables white people to get honest with ourselves about our own internalized racism and what will enable us to show up in a bigger, more vocal way, instead of staying silent out of fear of doing it wrong.

I think the fear of doing it wrong creates this fear and discomfort that we are not willing to feel. Because humans are terrible at feeling negative emotion. You're going to have to become willing to feel some of that, but I don't think that guilt and shaming yourself is a useful part of that. I just think it causes avoidance and those of us who are white in this society have the unearned privilege and advantage of being able to just avoid the topic if we want.

And so we have to consciously choose and invest in not doing that, and when we guilt and shame ourselves, I think that we just make avoidance more likely. So I did a whole half hour training about this for white people. I

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did it as a Facebook Live, but we have put it on the website along with a couple of different resources, work by black women and other women of color about anti-racism and white complicity and what white people can do to become more anti-racist.

And also people have asked me what other concrete actions I suggest doing, there's obviously - some people have protests around them they can go to, some people don't. If you want to make a donation, one of the places I encourage you to donate is to a bail fund, a local bail fund. And I have included a link to bail funds on this page too.

So it's basically just a collection of a limited - because overwhelm creates inaction - a set of limited resources. It has the links to two of my previous podcast episodes that I think may be useful for you. It's Unfuck Your Brain 102, it's called Internal Bias and How to be a Better Ally. And then Unfuck Your Brain 31 is called What About Sexism.

Obviously by its title, it is about sexism, but it has some concepts that you may find useful or applicable in thinking about racism or other forms of oppression. So you can find all of this stuff on unfuckyourbrain.com/justice. And you'll be able to listen to that training I did. I'm going to do another one about people pleasing and white silence and why I think a lot of white women don't speak up out of the kind of same people-pleasing tendencies and fear of conflict that happen in other areas of their lives.

And so I'm going to be doing another Facebook Live about that and that will also be posted on that page when it's done. You can also come follow me on Facebook or on Instagram. You'll see that stuff when it's happening live then.

Okay, so I think those are all the resources I wanted to tell you about that we've already done and that you can find at unfuckyourbrain.com/justice. I also want to let you know that I'm going to be offering a free public

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coaching call to coach some of you around your responses to George Floyd's murder and the protests and everything they represent.

Just a lot of big topics, on Friday June 5th at 3pm Eastern. So I'm going to be prioritizing coaching women of color, especially black women on this call. You have to register to get the information, to get the link for the call. We don't share Zoom links publicly anymore because of the increase in Zoom bombing that's been going on.

So you will need to register to get the info but you don't need to apply for coaching. I will just ask people to raise their hands and I will ask people to let women of color, particularly black women, raise their hands first. I will coach as many people as I can to during the call.

So to register for the call, just go to unfuckyourbrain.com/june5. So it's the word June and the number five. No spaces. Or you can text your email to +1-347-997-1784. Text your email to that number and when you get asked for the codeword, the codeword is JUNE5. All one word. And then that'll get you registered and set up for the call. So I will coach some of you then. I'll talk to you all soon.