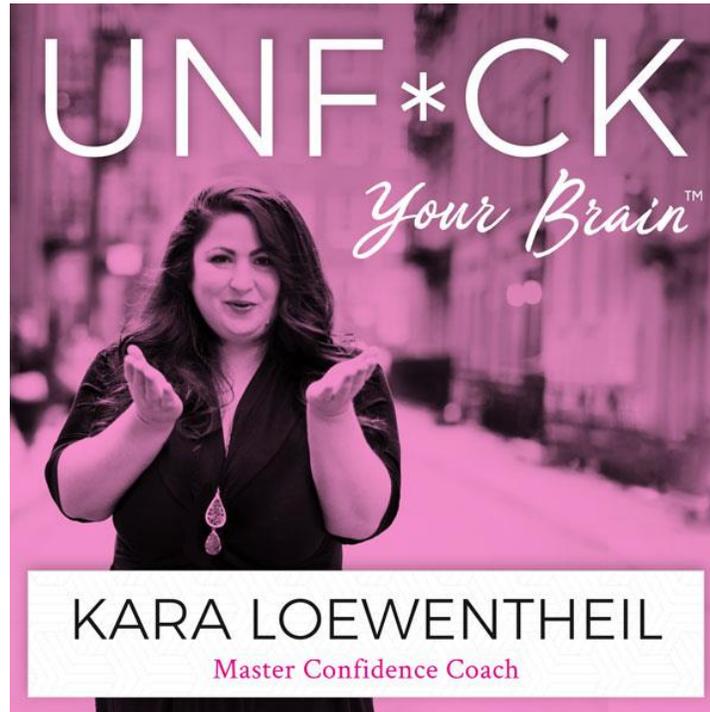


# UFYB 144: Get Out of Other People's Models



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

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## UFYB 144: Get Out of Other People's Models

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? I am looking at an amazing view. I rented a cabin upstate for two months and it has a backyard woods, like it's a backyard but it's woods that back right up to kind of like a creek or a little river or a big stream. I don't really know exactly the differences.

But I think there are ocean people and lake people and river people, and I guess people who don't care about water. I don't know if that's true. I just made it up. But I kind of think it might be. Like my mom is an ocean person. She really likes to go to the beach. My dad is a lake person because he wants to go out and boat on the lake.

By boat I mean kayak and canoe. Not like, motorboat. I don't know why that matters but it just seemed important. And I'm like, a stream or creek or river person. I don't need to take a boat out or have sand everywhere. I just want to watch water run by me like, 24/7. I find it such soothing - it's like visual white noise and audio white noise actually because it's that.

So I can feel evolution working on me. I think we're evolutionarily attracted to running water because it's cleaner than stagnant water. Brains are wild. Anyway, so I moved into this house for the summer and there have been some issues. I'm going to tell you about them for a reason.

So it was a kind of issue that's solvable, but it required me to spend a not insignificant amount of money to solve it myself. And I had a lot of negative feelings about it. And I am not usually like that about spending money. I actually think of money kind of like a river. It's always flowing to me and away from me.

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So yes, I'm paying more than I normally would have expected to to solve this problem, but that alone is not the kind of thing that riles me up, thanks to thought work really. I am very pragmatic about solving problems. I really just evaluate the solutions and I just choose what I want to do without a lot of drama, which is not what I used to be like.

So let me just be clear. This is not how I always thought about things. If this had happened five years ago, I would have been super stressed out. Number one, I wouldn't have had the money to just solve the problem because my money mindset was a mess and I didn't make much money.

And two, because I would have had a lot of thoughts about making the wrong decision, being wasteful. I would have been hearing other people's voices and opinions in my head like, my teacher or my mom or my friends, what they would say I should do. So I would have had a lot of confusion and conflict.

So, I knew when I was coaching myself that these feelings are not really about the money, and it never is. Whether we choose to pay for something or not, whether we even have the ability to pay for something or not, it's a circumstance. Our thoughts about it are what create our feelings.

So I was coaching myself about this and trying to get to the bottom of why I was having such an intense reaction, and I realized that the place I kept getting stuck was that I was fixated on whether or not the owners had told me the truth about what was going on with the house.

And in my unmanaged mind, that made a huge difference. I was very stuck on whether or not they had misrepresented something, whether there was some intentional or even unintentional misleading or misrepresentation going on.

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That was keeping me really stuck and ruminating because I just kept revisiting the same facts over and over again. Trying to convince myself logically one way or another, whether they had known about the issue or had told the truth about the issue or not.

So I just kept - it's like a lawyer trying a case over and over and over, and obviously I was a lawyer, but I know that many of my clients do this who are not lawyers. It's like, just revisiting the same pieces of evidence over and over and over, trying to come up with some new interpretation that will give us certainty.

So in other words, I was all up in their model. And that's why I couldn't find my way out. I was all up in what they were thinking. So today I want to teach you how to know when it is useful to think about other people's models, think about what other people are thinking or feeling or doing and why, and when it isn't.

And I'm framing it this way because I have a whole episode about the benefits of imagining other people's models. Imagining other people's models can help you understand situations from a different point of view, develop compassion, see multiple sides to a story, relate better to other people. There can be a lot of benefits.

Most of us think about everything through the lens of making it mean something about us, our value, our worth, our abilities. So, imagining someone else's model can be super helpful. Like is it more likely that your partner thought, "I don't care what she wants so I'm not taking out the trash," or is it more likely they thought, "I'm in a rush, I'll get to the trash later?"

I can give you a million other examples. If you listen to that episode, I talk about it in depth, how imagining what's actually in someone else's brain

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can give us compassion and empathy and take that focus off of making everything about us. So sometimes that is helpful.

But some of us have a tendency to be way too up in other people's models. We spend too much time thinking about what other people are thinking or doing or what's going to happen with them. We're all up in their models, and we get fixated on trying to figure out what they mean or what they intend or what they think or what they feel.

And so, we make our mental and emotional state contingent on their model. We think that in order to know how we want to think or feel or act, we have to know what they are thinking or feeling or doing. And that is generally useless. Because when you don't have that information, you end up in a version of indecision.

So remember I've taught on the podcast before that indecision happens when you just keep thinking your same thoughts that cut both ways, like you have two options and you have some thoughts about why each one is good and bad. You just keep thinking about those over and over. And you hope that it will somehow magically cohere and come together into certainty, but of course it never does because nothing new is happening, you're just rethinking the same thoughts over and over again.

So the same thing happens here. When you are too up in other people's models, you're in a form of indecision. You keep thinking about all the possibilities of what they might have been thinking or feeling or doing or meaning, waiting for it to cohere into certainty, so that you can decide how you want to think or feel or act.

And when you're doing that, you start to feel powerless. Because you have abandoned what you can control, which is your own model. And you're spending all this emotional energy trying to imagine or figure out or

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understand something that you can't control at all, which is someone else's model. What they think, what they feel, what they do.

And I see this come up in so many ways with my clients. If you look at dating, so much dating anxiety comes from spending too much time thinking about the other person's model. What are they thinking about me? Do they like me? Why did they cancel the date? Why haven't they texted back? Are they going to ask me out again? On and on and on.

You get absorbed into speculating about this other person's model and you get farther and farther away from the core of your own power, which is your model. And it's not just in dating. You think about work, or your family or friends, there's so many areas of life where we get hung up on trying to figure out what is going on in someone else's brain.

It is very easy to tell the difference between the useful way of thinking about other people's models, and the non-useful way. So if when you think about the other person's model, what you do is you brainstorm a few things they might be thinking in a way that takes the focus off you or at least you're not taking it personally and negatively, you don't make their thoughts about your worth, you come up with thoughts that help create love and compassion for them, that's useful.

If you take a few minutes to do that and you feel calmer and more centered, great, move on with your life. But if your thinking keeps going around in circles and never resolves, or even if you come up with thoughts that seem like they create compassion and empathy and feel good, but then you still can't stop thinking about it and you keep thinking about it and you still feel agitated, that's how you know you're not doing it in a useful way.

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If you find yourself thinking you don't know what to do or you just have to know what they're thinking in order to feel better, you want to keep thinking about the options you came up with and think about some more, that's when you need to get out of their model.

Now, we're taught to do this as women. Nothing has gone wrong. This is how your brain is wired. Women are taught that what other people think of us matters more than what we think of us. And that our job is to make everyone like us all the time.

And humans in general are predisposed to care about social acceptance because we evolved as members of small knit tribes that needed each other to survive. But then women get this whole extra layer of socialization on top that makes us care about the approval, not only of people close to us, but really anyone we encounter anywhere for any reason, even when we disagree with their beliefs or don't like them or will never see them again.

So as usual, there's nothing wrong with you. Your brain is trying to help you. It thinks it's really important to know what other people are thinking all the time, but it's wrong. It's not important and it's not helpful. So how do you get out of another person's model? You have to return to your model.

Regardless of what someone else is thinking or saying or doing, you get to decide how you want to show up. And notice I didn't say how you want to respond. Even that is reactive. When you think how should I respond to what this person is doing or saying, you're like, asking yourself how you should respond to your own thoughts about the other person.

It's still reactive. It's not about them and what they're doing or not doing. It's like, if we're starting from scratch, just how do I want to show up to this situation or this interaction. It's about you and how you want to be. How do

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you want to feel? What would you need to think to create that feeling? How would that feeling make you act and what result would you get?

So for instance, with my issue with this house, I actually got some coaching from a friend of mine that helped me clarify this because what she said to me was, what if it doesn't matter what they knew or didn't or what's appropriate or not? What if none of that matters?

And what that helped me see was that I get to decide what I think, what I feel, what I want to communicate from a place of not making it dependent on what someone else has thought or done or said or didn't say. It's not dependent on anything that I can't know about.

Because when you are up in someone else's model, you are neglecting your own model. When you are focusing on someone else's mind, you are neglecting your own mind. When you are believing that you need to figure out someone else to feel okay, you're not figuring out yourself.

And when you're focused on someone else's life, you are dropping out of your own life. All of your power is waiting for you inside your model. So, when you ask yourself why did they say that, what did they mean, what are they thinking, why haven't they done this or that, you're asking an unanswerable question in your own mind.

It's like sending a retrieving dog out to retrieve something that doesn't exist. You can search your mental files forever. You will never find an answer, and you will never arrive at certainty. When you return to your own model, that's when you feel a sense of relief because your own model can produce certainty.

And I want to be clear here. Some of you are thinking, well, I could just ask the person what they're thinking. It doesn't work most of the time because

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the truth is if your brain wants to be confused about this or doesn't like the answer, you will just decide that they weren't telling the truth, or they're wrong about what they thought or meant.

When your brain has committed to believing that it matters that you can only think and feel how you want to if they thought and felt a certain way, then you're invested in the answer being a certain way, and if you get a contrary answer, you won't like it and your brain will reject it and try to excuse it away.

So it truly doesn't work, even to try to get the answer from them most of the time. It is only when you return to your own model that you can feel grounded. Human brains love certainty. Certainty means it's safe to relax to our primitive brain. And sometimes that works against us in life, but in this context, it is a signal that you're back to focusing on what you can control.

You can be certain about what you are going to think and feel and do, and that will set you free to resolve whatever knot has been created in your brain and move on. You never have to know what someone else is thinking in order to decide what you are going to think.

You never have to know with certainty what's going on in somebody else's brain to know with certainty what you want to create in your brain, and that is where all of your freedom will be found. Have a beautiful week my chickens, 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, "Well, I don't know how to get started with thought work or I don't know exactly how to do

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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 [unfuckyourbrainn.com/theclutch](http://unfuckyourbrainn.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.