

UFYB 160: Your Self Story & DEI Update



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 we all doing? It is gray and rainy. It has been raining for like a week straight, which I just feel like is more than it should be allowed to rain. But apparently, I'm not in charge of these things.

But I'm feeling energized anyway. I just got off a great call with my DEI coach, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion coach. Her name is Trudi Lebron. She's great. And I thought before we dive into today's topic, I would take a minute and just kind of update you all on how that work is going.

So when I hired Trudi, I really wanted to work on doing an audit of my business and making sure that it was inclusive in its operations, not just in its teaching and its values. So I have been teaching for a while about internalized oppression, not just sexism but also racism, sizeism, an intersectional social justice approach to thought work in general. That's what I do.

And we already had materials on how to use these tools for members of The Clutch, for my students. Of course, I always still have more work to do on myself and there's always deeper work to do in creating content and tools for my students to work on these issues.

So that's not to say that we have that all figured out, but we're already working on it. It was ongoing. It was already a big area of focus. But I wanted to kind of get a sense of how we were doing in terms of DEI priorities, along other facets of the business, and how we can make it more inclusive in ways that made sense for our business structure, our values, our mission. The practice has to match the theory.

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So here I'm going to update you guys on a few of the things we've done so far and what we're still working on. I think it's important that if we say we're going to take a look at certain issues, that we report back on what we're doing.

So in terms of economic accessibility, we have created a scholarship fund to provide partial scholarship for Clutch College courses and events. So The Clutch is my feminist coaching community. It's a monthly membership program that you can join.

And inside, we do Clutch Colleges, which are more intensive small-group events where you can really dive deep into a topic you're struggling with, you have kind of a much smaller group of other students to learn with, you have more coaching calls with me, more chance to get coached by me. It's sort of like your specialized courses.

So we've created a scholarship fund to provide scholarships to those events. We named it The Feminist Mindset Revolution fund. And then for each different event, we're giving the grants in honor of an amazing feminist activist or scholar, or just all-around feminist badass.

So the first round we gave an honor to Angela Davis, the second round we gave in honor of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and then we'll see who we're going to do for the next one. So for the last several Clutch College events, we have saved - and going forward, we're saving between 20% to 25% of the spots for scholarship seats, and then we're providing scholarships for students to make it more possible for them to do the program.

And when I do the advanced feminist coaching certification that I'm launching later this year, we'll be handling that in the same way. I've also been working on a way to make The Clutch more accessible, which I'm

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going to be launching in 2021, and I'll be sharing way more details as we get closer to that.

But I'm super excited about it because I think it's a really innovative model that will increase accessibility while also really making sure that the people who want this work the most are the people who are able to get access to it, so that it really will set up a system where being invested in doing the work and taking the work seriously and applying it to your life to create change is part of what will factor into our more kind of accessible offering and the ways in which we can make the work accessible to more people.

So I know that's a little vague, we're going to release all the details when we get there, but I spent a lot of time thinking about how I wanted to do this in a way that would both make The Clutch more accessible, but also really be true to my and the company values of people showing up to do the work, being in integrity with the work, and kind of showing up to change their own lives.

So I'm super excited about that and I will be sharing more as we get closer. We've also looked at internal and hiring processes along economic accessibility lines. So in our hiring process, we usually have the finalist for a role take a test related to the role. That's something that a lot of employers ask for in the coaching industry, it's pretty standard, and most organizations don't pay for it.

But we have started paying people who take the test for their time. So we're not asking people to do unpaid labor. We've also internally created a matching gift policy for social justice organizations to encourage employees to donate. And also formalized a kind of annual coaching benefit that's available to all employees of the organization, to make coaching more accessible for employees also and that they can get coaching on anything they want. It doesn't have to be work related.

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And then the other - the second big area we've been looking at and that I have been wanting to work on is our kind of hiring and teaching within The Clutch. So in The Clutch we have guest coaches who come teach Clutch webinars on various different subjects.

We have them on breakups and trouble with friendship and exercise and intuitive eating and style coaching and productivity with ADHD and dealing with grief, and kind of you name it. We have a lot of amazing bonus materials and bonus webinars and trainings.

And so we have really doubled down on focusing on hiring Black, Indigenous, and people of color to lead these webinars. And now half of our webinars, half of our guest coaches are Black, Indigenous, or people of color coaches. And they have done webinars both on their specific area of expertise and whatever they happen to coach on, like one is one ADHD and organization, and one is on friendship, et cetera, whatever their expertise is.

But we also have added a webinar with one of my former students, who's now a certified life coach on using thought work on racism as a Black woman living in America. It's actually Erika Royal Barnes, who many of you heard on the podcast talking about that same topic.

So we are now at half, 50% of those guest teachers being Black, Indigenous, people of color, and we also rearranged when we release - when you join The Clutch, we don't want to overwhelm you with material and information, so we want you to learn how to coach yourself, and then we sort of give you access to content as you go along so that you have the right pace, you know what to do next.

Sometimes when you join a coaching membership, I find it's completely overwhelming and you don't know what to do. So we have kind of looked at

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and rearranged when we release these various pieces of content, both to make it make sense for your progress through the work, but also so that our Black, Indigenous, and people of color who are Clutch members are seeing more coaches who look like them at every step of the process.

So they don't end up just all collected at one certain point if we only did - if it was just by subject orientation, I want to make sure that people are seeing themselves reflected in the leadership, in the expertise, in The Clutch as they go along.

We're also doing something I'm super excited about that it's possible I have not seen in another coaching membership but is really so in line with and integral to my own mission and ethos for this work. And this actually came out of a very thoughtful detailed email that one of the Clutch members wrote to me, asking me about what we were doing with our DEI work, what were our commitments, what were our benchmarks.

And in thinking about her questions, sort of came up with this idea, which I'm so excited about, which is that we've opened up applications for - either have opened or shortly about to. If you haven't heard about this yet and you're in The Clutch, that just means we haven't opened it up yet.

So we have opened or shortly about to open applications for Clutch members themselves to teach short peer coaching videos that their fellow members can watch. And for me, we're certainly going to be looking at making sure we have an inclusive range of teaching going on, because this is not just about any inclusivity along any particular identity.

It's actually also about a way of addressing the hierarchy of traditional coaching program. So in traditional coaching programs, the coach has all the answers, and everybody else doesn't know anything. And one of the reasons that I've always had a Facebook group for The Clutch, even

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though Facebook is problematic in some ways, because peer coaching and teaching and learning is actually a huge part of the mission and values of this organization for me has always been very important that this has that sort of community aspect to me that it's not well, no one knows each other and you just apply for coaching and an expert gives you an answer.

In my coaching, I try to be very participatory and collaborative and non-directive in terms of I think my job is to show you what your brain is doing, and give you some options for how you can proceed. But I don't tell you what to do.

And in addition to that, it's so important to me that women all learn how to do this work with themselves and each other. I cannot possibly coach everyone in the world. I want all of my students to learn how to coach themselves, to practice that, practice with each other.

So that's why we've always had the community because peer coaching and teaching and learning is such a big part of the mission and values of the business and the organization, and my mission and values as a coach and as a human.

So this is like a next level of that. Really giving students the opportunity to share even a higher level. In the community and the Facebook group, everybody can try their hand at coaching, which is amazing. Newbies can jump right in.

But also, this is going to give us an opportunity to allow students who have really invested a lot of time and energy and thoughtfulness in working through something specific in their life, whether with the help of me or a Clutch coach or just on their own in The Clutch, however they've done it, be able to kind of teach what they've learned and give a lesson to their peers.

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And of course, we'll be compensating anyone who's selected to do one of these videos on that same principle of not asking for free labor. So I'm really excited about those. I think those are going to be amazing and we're going to open up the call for those periodically.

And then the other place we looked at was hiring for the organization. We hired a new Clutch coach recently. Our Clutch coaches were very diverse along LGBTQ lines. We had two queer Clutch coaches, but they're both white women.

And so when we hired a new Clutch coach recently, really focused on making sure that process was inclusive, specifically with regards to race, racial identity, background, et cetera. And we did outreach, which I think is required to get a truly diverse candidate pool. You can't just sort of say hey, we hope some people apply, we hope we get a diverse pool.

We did a lot of outreach and we ended up with a really diverse candidate pool along multiple levels, but in specifically, that was, I would say just over 50% of our applications were from coaches who identified as Black, Indigenous, or another person of color.

And we hired an amazing women of color coach. The paperwork hasn't been signed when I'm recording this so I can't announce her publicly yet, but those of y'all in The Clutch will have met her by the time that it comes out.

And then internally, in addition to my work with my DEI coach, we've updated our company values, which were already liberation-focused, to be more specific about internalized racism in addition to sexism and other forms of oppression. And my team's also been attending DEI workshops and trainings, and we're going to be integrating that work into onboarding as we start to expand the company.

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And then the last kind of big category is membership inclusivity. So we conducted a demographic survey of our membership to know where we are and we could set benchmarks for the future. And we looked at a couple different categories. We are already kind of where we'd like to be on membership, on having LGBTQI+ Clutch members, and we have good diversity across different age ranges as well.

The place that we still have some work to do is along the metrics for what percentage of our community, what percentage of our students are Black, Indigenous, or people of color. We are more diverse than most coaching memberships, where the founding coach is a white woman, but we're not where we want to be.

We're at about 25% and we want to be getting - we're trying to get to 40%. So we'll be setting annual goals each year to kind of move us towards that 40% over time. So we're also paying attention to kind of the diversity and makeup of our Clutch College events.

We have in The Clutch talked earlier about the scholarship program now to help make those events more economically accessible, and of course because there are disparities in income among women and people of different racial backgrounds, there is an indirect effect, just from that. But we're also just sort of focusing on how we're teaching, how we're publicizing the events and sort of whether we're drawing a diverse cross-section of the group.

And so we had a Clutch College course focused on body image over the summer, where we had 50% of the students were Black, Indigenous, people of color, and we are prioritizing Black, Indigenous, people of color in the scholarship grant process for Clutch College events that I talked about earlier.

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So the last thing I'll say is we've also begun collecting information about accessibility and disabilities and diagnoses for members so that we can make sure our materials are accessible and the experience is accessible. We're working on improving that.

We have already added closed captioning to the coaching calls and webinars. And the course materials, when you join The Clutch, you get access to all these different coaching materials and tools, those are already compatible with accessibility technology, but we're kind of looking at even more additional measures we can take there.

Alright, that's the update. I will keep reporting back as we make progress on these goals over time. So let's get into today's topic. And this came out of a coaching call I did last week where I was coaching a brand-new Clutch member and she was really stuck in this thought pattern that is so common.

And I think the coaching we did on this is coaching that would be impactful for so many of you, and so I want to walk you through it. So this student wanted coaching because she had an opportunity coming up to advocate for herself, and she was stressing out about it because her thought was that in the past, she had not advocated for herself. She had let herself down.

And so now she thought of herself as someone who doesn't advocate for herself. And this was creating all this stress about trying to advocate for herself now. So the place she was so stuck was believing her thoughts about her past self.

She thought that her story about who she'd been in the past was fact, and that these facts determined how she had to think about herself. So after I coached her, another Clutch member posted in the Facebook group that

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during the call, she'd written on a sticky note, "My actions don't determine what I'm allowed to think about myself."

I told her immediately that I was stealing that because it was such a good articulation of what I had been teaching in a longer 20-minute coaching session. But what's so powerful about that is it encapsulates what most of us think, and I think there's two levels of it.

The first level is the way that our thoughts create our results. So we think that our thoughts about the past are true facts. They are the story of our life. And we think that the story of our life so far determines what kind of character we can be.

And then we think we have to base our self-esteem and the way we talk to ourselves on these "facts" from our past. But all of your thoughts about who you are and who you've been and what you've done are just thoughts. And even if some of them are facts, you still get to choose what to think about yourself.

No matter what actions you've taken in the past, they don't determine what you're allowed to think about yourself now. This is such a crucial idea to understand because this is not just about being nice to yourself for the sake of being nice to yourself, which actually is important. But that's not all that's at stake here.

When you believe that you have to base your thoughts about yourself on your past actions, you sentence yourself to a lifetime of only being able to be that same person and take those same actions. I'm going to say that again. When you believe that you have to base your thoughts about yourself on your past actions, you sentence yourself to a lifetime of just repeating them.

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So let me break this down with an example. Let's say you've never made much money in the past. You haven't believed you could make money, whether it's as an entrepreneur, you didn't believe you could sell your offer, you didn't believe you could negotiate if you were taking a job, you haven't asked for raises or you haven't raised your prices. You believe you can only make as much as the average person in your field can make.

Let's even say you wasted some money. Let's pretend that's a circumstance and a fact. You invested money or bet some money on people or ideas that didn't work out, you loaned some people money who never paid you back, whatever. You made decisions that didn't produce financial gains or even lost you money.

And so your thought about yourself is that you're someone who struggles to make ends meet and you've made bad decisions with money in the past. So you would say to me, well, it's obviously impossible to believe that I'm good with money, look at my past, look at the facts. I've made bad decisions with my money, I've wasted it. Maybe I bought stuff I don't need, or I didn't ask for a raise or I loaned it to someone sketchy or whatever I've done.

How could I possibly think I'm good with money? Look at these facts, I'm not good with money. But your past actions do not determine what you're allowed to think about yourself.

I teach you that your thoughts create your feelings, your feelings drive your actions, your actions produce your results. So if you keep thinking thoughts about how you're bad with money, how are you ever going to get better with it?

This is the big mistake that people make. They think that dwelling on their inadequacies or failures in the past will motivate them to change. But it

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doesn't. It just produces shame. And it produces more of the same result. Your thoughts produce your results.

Thinking you're bad with money will never make you act better with money. Do you see what I'm saying? If your thoughts produce your feelings and your actions and your results, and this whole time you've been thinking you're bad with money and you've been getting the result of not being good with money, that's what you're going to keep getting if that's what you keep thinking with that thought.

When you think you're bad with money, you don't pay any attention to your money. You don't look at your budget. You just spend randomly. You don't look for opportunities to make more money. When you think about your budget or you get a notification that check bounced, you just distract yourself. When you do have money, you just spend it without thinking about.

When you think you're bad with money, you take a bunch of actions that produce more evidence that you're not good with money. You cannot get the result of being good with money by thinking that you're bad with money.

So if you limit yourself to only being allowed to believe something about yourself that is proved by your past actions, you will never be able to change. That's it. That's the deal. If you want a new result, you have to think new thoughts.

Your past thoughts created your past results. So if you base your current thoughts on those past actions, which are created by those past thoughts, you're just going to keep thinking those past thoughts and getting those past results.

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Your brain has free will. That is the best news in the world. It is a free agent. You can choose to believe something about yourself that is literally contradicted by every one of your past actions or results. You really can. If you yell at your kids all the time, you do not have to think I'm someone who yells at her kids all the time or his kids all the time.

You're allowed to think I'm a calm and peaceful parent. And the mind-blowing part is you must think something like that. You actually must think something that is contradicted by your past in order to produce a different future. Say that again. You must think something that is contradicted by your past in order to create a different future.

I'm coaching people all the time who are like, well, it's just really hard to believe this new thing because I have all this evidence. Like right, obviously. Of course you have all that evidence. That's the thought you've been thinking that's been producing that evidence for you for decades.

It's supposed to be hard; it's supposed to be contradictory. That's not a flaw. That's not a bug. That's the feature that we want. You have to believe you're something new or different before you actually can ever be it or do it. Before you have any evidence or any proof. Even when all the evidence and the proof goes the other way.

That's what's so mind-boggling about this. Your actions do not determine what you are allowed to think about yourself. The other element I love about this concept that your actions don't determine what you're allowed to think about yourself is that it opens up so much space for self-compassion.

No matter what you've done, your actions don't determine what you're allowed to think about yourself. You're not required to blame or shame yourself. You're not required to criticize yourself. You're not required to believe the worst about yourself no matter what you've done.

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No matter what actions you've taken, they're in the past. The past is over. It's done. It's as gone as ancient Rome. No matter what actions you've taken, you get to decide what to think and how to think about yourself now, today, in the present. Your past actions don't determine what you're allowed to think about yourself now.

Such a beautiful gift to give yourself, so I want you to give yourself that gift today. I'll talk to you next week.

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.

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