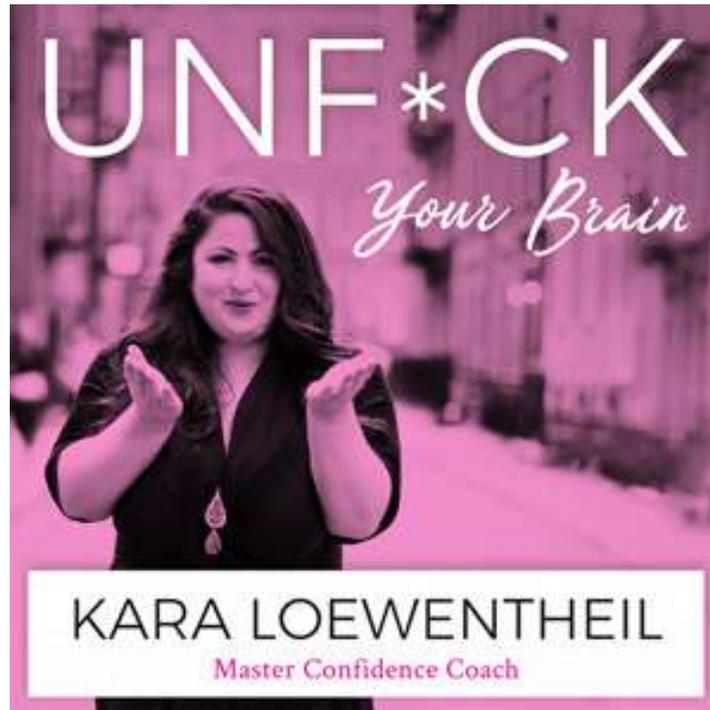


**UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth,
and the Industrial Revolution:
A Conversation with Simone Seol**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

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 friends. I have quite a treat for you today. Today, we are going to be talking to Simone Seol, who is a life coach who teaches other coaches how to basically be their weird ass amazing selves in their marketing and in how they talk to their clients. We're not really talking about marketing because this is not a marketing podcast.

But Simone and I are both very intellectual in ways in our approach to coaching. She's also more woo in some ways than I am, but I think we share a really kind of unique blend of - can you say you share something unique? Let's go with it.

We share similar and unusual blends I think of kind of heart and mind in our coaching and in our approaches to life. And so we have been talking a lot recently about the value of rest and why women have so much trouble resting and the sort of cult of hustle mentality and the cult of productivity.

And Simone is also a nerd like me, so on this episode, we kind of dive into our thinking about the way women are socialized to think about work and rest, the impact of the Industrial Revolution, we talk about kind of the intellectual and social history of rest and we talk about the ways in which there are feminist reasons to be reclaiming rest and to be divorcing our self-worth from that productivity hustle that is so deeply ingrained.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

So it was an amazing conversation, I loved it so much, and I cannot wait for you guys to hear it. I know you are going to get so many mind-blowing gems from this talk.

Simone: Well actually, depending on where you're listening from, this is either the Joyful Marketing podcast with Simone Seol, or it's Unf*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil. So either way, welcome.

Kara: Or both. You should listen to this twice because it's going to be that good.

Simone: That's right. So I'm going to introduce myself first. For those of you who might be meeting me for the first time, I am Simone Seol. I'm indeed the host of the Joyful Marketing podcast, and I am the marketing coach for life coaches. And I always forget to say what to say after that.

Kara: I don't know, that sounds good. I'm Kara Loewentheil. I'm the host of the Unf*ck Your Brain podcast. I am a feminist mindset coach. It means I teach women how to identify what patriarchy and socialization has done to their brains and then how to fix it. Also, you guys can't see Simone, but she's wearing - she's famous for her glasses collection, among other things. In addition to her marketing brilliance, she has the world's possibly biggest, most amazing collection of giant glasses.

Simone: Yeah. You know my favorite thing about that is that everybody assumes that I get my frames from weird little indie stores that only I know about, I got this in boutique in Prague three years ago. Actually, they're mostly from Amazon and box stores. You too can Google them.

Kara: They are amazing, but what you can't Google is the aplomb to carry them off. That's what you can't Google. That is the specific stuff.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

Simone: Well, guess what? The aplomb - is that how you say it? I've never said that word.

Kara: I have no idea. Until I was 35, I thought that the word misshapen was pronounced miss-hapen. So once I heard it said out loud, I was like, oh, now that I think about it, that does make sense. That makes sense. That checks out. Definitely.

Simone: Aplumb or aplomb, however it's pronounced, it starts with a thought. And you can borrow the thought too, which is that if I want to wear it, I can pull it off, I can carry it off.

Kara: That's a good thought. I like it.

Simone: Yeah. I firmly believe that being able to pull something off is a thought. Okay, so I was stalking Kara for far longer than she was stalking me.

Kara: Now it's a mutual stalking endeavor. I just...

Simone: Now it's mutual.

Kara: Oh my god, we have to pause so I can tell this story because I infamously stalked Rachel Hart to be my friend. And then I heard this NPR story this week about this guy whose best friend moved to Vienna without telling him and so he just moved to Vienna also. But he just showed up. He was like, hey, you're not allowed to move without me, now I live here too. So I sent it to Rachel and I was like, this makes me look very chill. I did not...

Simone: His best friend moved to Vienna without - why would a best friend move somewhere without telling their best friend?

Kara: Because this is what happens to straight men under patriarchy and the way that they're socialized.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

Simone: Oh my god Kara, you have so much work to do in the world.

Kara: They don't communicate about these things. They're just like, oh, I'll let you know later. I mean, my boyfriend that I had at the beginning of the pandemic, my ex was trapped in Paris during the pandemic. And it was this whole thing and he couldn't get out. And then he didn't tell me that he was coming home until he was on the plane coming home. That was when he thought to let me know that was happening. And I was texting Rachel in a - what is happening?

And she asked her husband, "When would you let me know if that happened to you?" And he was like, "Yeah, once I'm on the plane." So this is just a whole other thought process.

Simone: I do not understand their models. Anyway, I was saying I think the mutual stalking started to happen when Kara and I kind of started bonding over our shared slacker identity.

Kara: Our love of naps.

Simone: Our love of naps. And we started talking about it little bit by little bit, and then we realized there's something here. Or at least I realized there's really something here that's a piece of the conversation that's really missing. And Kara teaches a lot about productivity and mindset and I teach a ton about business and coaching.

And I think obviously, people bring a lot of their assumptions and beliefs about productivity and what it means to do good work that are unquestioned. These unquestioned assumptions about that into their work in marketing and they make themselves a lot more miserable than they need to. They make themselves a lot less productive than they could be.

And I've unwittingly become a champion for taking long naps and doing things the "lazy" way, and I didn't start out thinking this was something I

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

was going to stand for as a principle. I actually started out thinking it was a personality defect.

Kara: Always.

Simone: 100% doing it wrong. And to my own surprise, I think I kind of figured out along the way with my thoughts, a recipe for tapping into a great well of creativity and power and productivity inside me that was completely not at all - not only mutually exclusive with a flippant disregard for what conventional culture teaches as what productivity looks like and these schedules and routines and calendars and stuff like that.

Not only was it not mutually exclusive, I feel like my power and creativity came from the way that I really - I felt free to honor my own rhythms and flows. So we started talking about that. And I think at the time, you can tell this story, but you were also going through something. I don't want to tell your story but...

Kara: No, yeah. I was doing the same work and I think getting to the next level of it, I mean, this is something that I got coached on in my master coach training, whenever that was, five years ago, where I have always been somebody who can basically produce A- work in an hour that takes other people nine hours. But then I'm constantly telling myself if you can do the A- in an hour, then you should spend the nine hours, then it would be an A+.

Simone: It's a personality flaw if you don't want to do that.

Kara: Yeah, exactly. And like of course you should trying to be the best, right? So I've been getting coached on this on and off for years and I remember my master coach training, Brooke Castillo being like, what if you were just like, hey, isn't it awesome that I can do an A- in an hour without any planning or prep?

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

Like Stacey Boehman and I talk about this all the time, and I think one of - what she and I talk about is how we're opposite and we both have trouble accepting it because this is what patriarchy does to women, I think is just teaches us to believe that however we're doing it is wrong.

Simone: Sorry, I'm just laughing because continuing on the theme that you started with Rachel Hart, in my mind, it's always people who can produce A- work in an hour, but they do go through the trouble of producing A+ work in nine hours, that's why they end up in Harvard and I ended up at Wellesley.

Kara: Yeah, that's definitely not why. Rachel also would think that and it's the opposite.

Simone: We're human beings and I'm doing my life wrong.

Kara: Yeah, no. I went to Harvard by doing everything at the last minute. But Stacey had the opposite where she really does like to plan and spend a lot of time, but she was just beating herself up being like, well Kara can do it in an hour, I should just do it on the fly. So I think it's such an example of the truth is the problem with the capitalism and protestant productivity narrative, especially for women is that nobody wins.

Even the people who are keeping that schedule or doing the nine hours of work still don't feel good about themselves because you can never action your way to feeling good about yourself. So I have been working on this for years. And then I felt like I had gotten to an okay place with it, and then I started building my team and then it was just like, it all came back up.

It's like you can do work on dating and then you get in a relationship and it's like, oh Jesus, now there's a whole other level of work I have to do. And so the fact of being a boss with employees who did have fixed work hours, like brought up this whole new depth of having to do that work all over

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

again on what does it mean if I work. Even now, my brain is like, they're going to listen to the podcast, the employees, and they'll know.

Simone: They'll know what?

Kara: That what if I work three hours a day and they work eight hours a day? I had all this drama around having employees brought up this same thought pattern again, but just in the form of having drama around...

Simone: Kind of like being perfectionistic towards them?

Kara: Both. I think I was more judgmental of them when I was more judgmental of myself, of course. Also, kind of brought up this, well, it's okay if you're only doing four hours of work a day when it's just you, but you can't - but if you have employees who are working eight hours a day, you can't be doing four hours of work a day, right? As though it's the hours that matter.

And so when you and I started bonding about this, I had just finally had this breakthrough of like, oh, if somebody said to me, "Listen, you can hire me and I'm going to work four hours a day and I'm going to 10X your revenue," or whatever, "I'm going to double your revenue next year, but I'm only going to work four hours a day, I'm not doing anything else," I'd be like, sold. Where do I sign? I don't give a shit what you're doing with the rest of your time, right?

And that is my role in my business is to do the deep thinking, create the content, have the strategic vision, all these kinds of roles and jobs that maybe there are people who can do it eight hours a day. I'm not one of them. I can do it three or four hours a day max and then I need a nap.

So I think I had just gotten to that place and then you posted something about it and I was like - it was almost like I'm sure I'd heard that before but I

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

couldn't believe it. But then I was like, oh, okay, I'm not the only one who's like this.

Simone: That's amazing. This seems like the perfect time to introduce the concept I created 15 minutes ago.

Kara: Simone is trying to show me up. She was like, we're going to get on this podcast, we're just going to rap. And then I came on and she was like, hi, I've invented a new coaching concept with a whole name and I'm going to launch it on the podcast. And I was like, okay, well.

Simone: I've been taught well.

Kara: I didn't come up with a new coaching concept. I thought we were just hanging out but okay.

Simone: Okay, because I was like, a bit nervous about this conversation. I was like, I better have something good to show up with. This is how my perfectionism shows up. But then I started going through all the themes that we touched on in our conversations and the things that I was thinking about on my own.

And I drew this table with two columns in my brain and one with the kind of old, what Kara and I see as the outdated model of productivity and the assumptions we have about it, things we believe about it. And the other column is what I have been learning about different way of doing your work that is surprising and a lot of people aren't used to. So I decided to name the left column the patriarchal industrial model of creativity. It's a little clunky but go with me.

Kara: I would just call it the patriarchal industrial complex.

Simone: Complex, okay.

Kara: It's like the PIP complex. Patriarchal industrial productivity complex.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

Simone: Okay. I'm going to - I just have it written down my way so I'm just going to say.

Kara: When you say it, I keep hearing military industrial complex.

Simone: Okay, I'm just going to call it patriarchal industrial, whatever, creativity. And then the right column is post-industrial feminist model of creativity. And I call it feminist not just because Kara's on here, but I really think that this different way of thinking about productivity is really based in what is archetypically feminine wisdom and feminine knowing that I think has gotten really squashed over centuries or millennia of dominance of the patriarchy. And I'm going to tell you all about what I mean by that.

Okay, so I want to talk about each piece of it, how contrasting what it looks like in the patriarchal industrial model and the post-industrial feminist model.

Kara: It's almost like pre and post because it's like a return to something.

Simone: Sure. Yeah, totally.

Kara: It's like the Industrial Revolution changed everything and now we're like, wait, it's only been 200 years, this isn't how everything has to be. How can we kind of go back to that lost wisdom?

Simone: I completely agree. It's lost wisdom. It's not brand-new wisdom. I think it's actually probably more ancient wisdom that is more...

Kara: Way more of human history, right? The Industrial Revolution was only a couple hundred years. We have eons of time before that when people were not operating on this clock-based...

Simone: Perfect, exactly. Okay, great. So the first point I have about it is that the patriarchal industrial version of productivity is solitary and

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

individualistic, and the post-industrial version is collaborative and communal and communicative.

Kara: I didn't know if you were going to go through them all.

Simone: Yeah, I want to go through it one by one. I spend all of my time observing my clients who are life coaches, working on their marketing, working on their businesses. And so much - actually, as I'm talking about this, a lot of the concepts that I have listed out here on this table are going to kind of merge with each other.

But a lot of them think that the way to get the best work done is like, ass in chair and force myself to go through these tasks and it has to all come from my willpower and my brain and my models. And it's very much like, pushing my will and intellect out into the world. And it's a very one-way, unidirectional kind of flow.

I think that is very much a hallmark of this - it's a very isolating way of doing things. It's just you and what you produce is a measure of your worth. And there's no communal or collaborative aspect of it, and even if there is a collaboration, it's very much like, two individual people coming together with their separate pieces, as opposed to a true communication that is greater than the sum of its parts. Do you know what I mean?

Kara: Yeah, it's so interesting because what I experience with this sort of freedom around schedule and not being so time-based feels a little bit like, I don't know if I would say the opposite, but it feels like there was something about trying to force myself to work on a nine to five.

I had this moment where I was like, I have spent all of this time and money and effort building this whole business that I can run from anywhere, the way that I want to, and then I'm beating myself up that I'm not sticking to the schedule worked by the investment bankers. It just makes no sense.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

What was the point of all that if I'm supposed to then recreate that structure? If I'm going to recreate that for myself.

And so for me, it felt actually sort of like, I feel more individual - this probably also just reflects something, maybe part of a difference in how we think about things. I mean, on the one hand I completely agree with you about there is that sort of isolated individualistic version of like, yeah, my work is just me downloading from wherever. And I also am somebody who develops ideas best through talking them out, so I'm relational in that way.

But I think that this freedom to rest thing for me has felt very much like, actually honoring how I am as an individual and taking myself out of - I was much more thinking okay, this is how the collective is. I mean, it's an interesting paradox of industrialization. On the one hand it is very mechanistic. It's like everybody's in a factory, they're doing their one thing.

Simone: It's in the machine, you're a cog.

Kara: Yeah, but then there's a whole big machine. So it's this paradox of it's all one big group effort, and yet in the machine, everybody just has their one little part and there isn't a free exchange. What you're talking about, kind of a group generative creative process.

Simone: Yeah. I actually think we're talking about the same thing from different angles because I completely agree. There is a lot more freedom - free to be yourself and free to let your brain do what it does. But at the same time, when you give your brain the space to think and notice your organic flow in the first place, to be able to follow it, when you get into your solitary rhythm and you get to notice it for the first time, which you don't even notice it exists if you're trying to squash yourself to fit the machine your whole life.

What happens is that you actually open yourself up to a different level of receptivity. So it's kind of like, huh, what does my body have to teach me

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

about how I work best? And what kind of environments do I feel at my most generative? Or what kind of conversations, outer or inner conversations light me up?

And then you kind of get into a mode of noticing receptivity about what's around you and then you start noticing things that are going to help you. As opposed to you being in a mode of trying to push through a cognitively defined intellectual agenda through your force of will. And you're not receptive to any other form of intelligence that's trying to speak to you about how you might function best, how you might be productive best, and how you can best - because the work I do is marketing, really communicate with the people that you are trying to reach. It's a two-way communication.

Kara: Yeah, I wonder if it has something to do with the difference in our - we experience it differently a little bit based on the difference maybe in our - what our work is focused on. I think you're - you talk more about a relationship with the divine or with spirit in a way - I think we may come from different perspectives. But I think that's also so valuable. What I have been really thinking about a lot is not so much community with others, but actually the natural world.

Simone: I'm including that, yeah.

Kara: Yeah. The ways in which just sleeping when I'm tired and being trusting that, it's sort of this almost scarcity mindset of well, what if there isn't energy later in the week? What if I'm not going to get it done? As opposed to being trusting that if I sleep now, I will have energy to do it later, trusting that natural process.

And I read this book that I probably have already talked about on the podcast that I'm obsessed with. I think I sent it to you called Wintering. And that has really - and I think also being at home during the winter in a pandemic, that's really made me think about those natural ebbs and flows

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

and how one of the big interventions of the industrial - I feel like also we're talking about this like we're at a Harvard Wellesley colloquium.

Simone: I know.

Kara: Maybe we should define the Industrial Revolution. I think it's great. Listen, people think life coaching is light on the substance. No. Okay, Industrial Revolution is when society basically went from an agrarian system where most people lived on the land, they were farmed, they were also obviously tradespeople, craftspeople. It's not like everybody was a farmer, but decentralized.

And actually, I've been reading this book called Do Nothing that is a great book about this transition, to essentially the invention of the steam engine made it possible to have factories and now all of a sudden, it matters what's 8am, what's 8pm. How many hours are you working? All of a sudden, we have that plus the invention of electrical light and the ability to work past the natural rhythm of the sunup and the sundown.

Simone: Being able to ignore the natural rhythm.

Kara: Yeah, ignore it, totally.

Simone: Supremacy over the natural rhythm.

Kara: Right. And so then all of a sudden what you get is all these people working in factories, doing mechanized work over and over. You get the invention of modern commerce and capitalism. So that's what we're talking about when we're talking about the Industrial Revolution. It's the - for anybody who's listening who's like, what the fuck is going on, it's the invention of factories and modern labor.

And that has a whole host of different - I mean, it impacts every area of our life. For instance, now there's this structure where you're supposed to sleep

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

eight hours at a time and then you go to work and then you do whatever. Whereas there's the sort of lost history phenomenon of how people used to sleep, which was go to sleep basically when the sun went down, wake up four or five hours later, be up in the middle of the night for a few hours, people would visit with their neighbors, write in their journals, have sex, then they would have second sleep. They'd go back to sleep again.

It's a huge change in what was millennia of natural living. And so what Simone and I are kind of talking about here is what are the ways that that has - can I curse on your podcast? I know I can curse on my podcast.

Simone: Oh, yeah.

Kara: Occasionally I get on one and the host is like, we don't do that. Made sense, but how that's fucked up our ideas about what is productivity. We're all trying to fit ourselves into this - the nine to five. Where does that come from? It comes from the factory floor.

Simone: Literally from the factory floor.

Kara: Only after the unions got to it. Before that it was like, nine to nine. A 12-hour, 14-hour workday. It comes from that. And that has a cost.

Simone: The piece I think I was getting - you're helping me to better articulate my concept, but the piece about solitary individualistic versus collaborative is that if you're on the factory floor, your shift manager or the owner of the factory or whatever does not give a flying shit about your input or your feelings or your creative flow or anything.

So it's kind of like, that's the piece that's isolating and the thing is when you have your own business, as my clients do, or even if you don't have a business and you're one of Kara's clients and you have a job or you're a mom or whatever you are, the thing is in some way or another, we all get to be our own boss.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

We get to be our own manager. We get to make decisions about how we use your time, what we're going to prioritize, and how we manage ourselves. And we often get into the mindset of there's a dictatorial shift manager or factory floor manager and the employees, the factory workers' input does not matter. That's very unidirectional that way.

Kara: Yeah, we replicate that for ourselves.

Simone: Yeah, exactly. Whereas if you get out of that model, it's like, what if the shift manager really wanted to talk to you about your feelings? And he wanted to create a collaborative work environment for you?

Kara: But even if we back it up a step, productivity comes out of the work production, right? The whole idea that productivity is a thing is from the Industrial Revolution. It's like my understanding of intellectual history and linguistic history is basically about blacksmiths weren't sitting around in 1284 AD being like, I have not been productive today.

Simone: They had to measure, not productivity, but output somehow, right? If blacksmiths are supposed to create 10 axes a day, I don't know.

Kara: I think that's how we think about it but I'm not sure that's true. Yes, of course, I mean I think it's from my - I'm not a sociologist. This is layperson reading of the work. But we read this Do Nothing book, one of the things she talks about is that we assume we're so imbued in this idea that there have always been bosses, top down hierarchal that we sort of assume like, well okay, it was that way in the Middle Ages too.

You had the people in charge and then the serfs and everybody had bosses. But in fact, even serfs' land - agricultural peasants would work a certain number of hours a day, kind of sunup to sundown. But also, they were 100 days off a year from feast days and various other things. And that artisans and craftspeople were really just in charge of their own schedule and could work as much or as little as they wanted.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

Simone: That is not how I thought it went down.

Kara: I know, right? It's wild. This book is great. It's called Do Nothing. It's not what you think because we're so imbued with this idea about productivity, which I really think is a concept that really is - comes out of the Industrial Revolution and that sort of all of a sudden now you can be like, okay, how much are we producing? Let's double productivity, let's triple it.

That kind of thought process, it's like, one level of the coaching work we can do is to be like, okay, let's see how honoring our natural rhythm still allows us to be productive in a different way. And then the next level is like, who cares? There is obviously a desire to create and contribute that I think is natural, but I think we have to be careful.

Simone: This is too much for me. My brain can't handle this post-productive worldview. I can't handle it. What else are we living for if not to produce? I don't understand.

Kara: That's so wild, right? I had a coaching call in The Clutch, and usually - a month or two ago. And usually I coach three or four people an hour. I coached this one woman for I think 40 minutes, most of the call, because it was so relevant to everybody and because it was all about this.

She was like, I mean, she was in a less humorous, much more like I hate you way. I don't understand what you're saying. My value is based on - what am I here for if not to do things and produce things? And I do think - let's just ask ourselves that question.

Simone: I spend a lot of time thinking about dying and death.

Kara: Well, during all of our naps, what are you going to think about when you're just lying around?

Simone: Napping is a mini death.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

Kara: Yeah.

Simone: I think about the fact that we are all ultimately headed towards non-productivity because once we're dead, we're not producing anything. And also, leading up to the days that we die, in the best-case scenario, we die old and die in your sleep peacefully. But then we are meant to produce less and less and less as we go on.

If you're 90 years old you can't be produce 5000 widgets a day. And that is how old age is supposed to be. And I'm already - I'm thinking so much about this because I'm already anticipating my old age identity crisis of if I have nothing to produce for the world, what is my worth as a human being?

Kara: I mean, there's two levels, right? One is what are you producing. So you're not producing widgets, but maybe older people are producing wisdom or producing insight.

Simone: But what if I just don't want to talk to anybody and I'm a cranky old person...

Kara: You're producing wisdom for yourself. But I do think that next level is the production. Because what about people who live with disabilities who cannot produce widgets now anyway? I think what about people who don't want to?

I do think that it is hard to - the protestant capitalism goes almost as deep as the sexism and the racism and all of it. The idea - truly believing that it would be fine if we didn't produce anything or accomplish anything or finish tasks I think is mind-breaking for most of us. The idea that our value or our worth would not depend on that.

But I think it has to. When I think about value and worth, every time I teach on this I'm basically like, it is all made up. But either we all have it or we all don't. You're not going to convince me of any logical system where some of

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

us have some of it and it's titrated based on how many emails you answered today. It's either we're all in, we're all out. Those are the only two options. I choose to pick we're all in. In which case, what we produce really doesn't have anything to do with it.

Simone: Yeah. My brain is still a little bit broken.

Kara: I think it's normal. I think that's supposed to break it. I mean, I think that we have to let our brains be broken about that because it is such a dominant - what would life be like if you didn't think that your goal was to do things or produce things? People used to have lives like that.

Simone: That gets me thinking about why I work and why I work very hard when I do is that because I chalk it up to my ADHD, but I have a very poor receptivity to external direction. That's a nice way of putting it.

Kara: Most entrepreneurs have some version of oppositional defiant disorder probably.

Simone: Exactly. Well, they call it a disorder.

Kara: We really don't like being told what to do.

Simone: Yeah. And you know Gretchen Rubin's four tendencies? I'm totally a rebel and all my life I thought it was a personality defect but now I think otherwise. But why did I just bring this up? Oh, because I have never been good at working or producing because other people told me to or because I thought I should. Should just creates so much resistance and guilt and shame resentment inside me that that just sabotages everything, right?

So when I became an entrepreneur, it was finally an opportunity for me to discover, if it's not the should, what does compel me and what does push me? And it's a conversation I have a lot with my clients because they're learning how to think outside of that should model for the first time.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

And so that's why - I'm sure you experience a lot with your students as well Kara is if I'm not pressuring myself, if I'm not hustling myself for worthiness, if I'm not going to beat myself up if I don't meet my goal, then what's going to fuel me, right? How am I ever going to be motivated if it's not with a stick?

Kara: Yeah, this comes up all the time. And I think the normal life coaching answer, which I think is true is that's not actually how it works. You actually will have more energy, you will get more done. But I think that one of the things that I think distinguishes the way I do this work, like you, it's sort of like I have to for my brain. I can't only go halfway.

I have to go all the way. So for me to buy into that idea, I have to go all the way to and if you don't, so what? Who decided that it was better to produce shit while hating yourself, than to love yourself and do nothing? If those are only the two options, I always am trying to flip it for my clients. Like, no.

They think the bottom line is I have to produce things. Now, if you're telling me I can also be nice to myself, okay, I'll try that, but the production has to happen. That's the shift manager. That's like, listen, if you guys are saying that a longer lunch break would boost productivity, okay, you can try it. But we got to make that amount of widgets at the end of the day. That's the bottom line.

I want to flip that and say what if the bottom line non-negotiable is I'm nice to myself? And get shit done okay, if I don't get shit done, well, that's not a reason to change it. I'm nice to myself no matter what and then we'll see. And that really requires delinking that productivity from value.

Simone: I'm wondering though, I want everybody to sit with that, including myself. And I'm wondering for you though - this is what I experience. So once I delink all the shoulds and I fire my internal shift manager and then

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

what drives me - because I do want to work. I'm incredibly driven by my love of the work.

And the best I can capture what it feels like for me is that it really feels like a very organic and loving call and response with something, both outside of me and inside of me, but it feels like a loving pull. The way that when you're really attracted to somebody, your body is like, pulled towards them, you just want to go towards them and make out with them.

And I feel this pull towards work and responding to it is not stressful. I mean, sometimes it requires me to manage my mind, but it feels like showing up for something the way I would call it, for a sacred calling. Now, I think the difference here is that I don't as much make that professional calling, my "work" in the world such an essential part of my identity anymore because I realize that if I got old and sick or whatever, and if I didn't have that, I would break down. I don't want to break down. So what else is there to me?

And so I think I'm not quite at the level that you were just talking about where I completely - I have it completely delinked. But I'm learning that my worthiness as a person or my purpose in life isn't just about my professional identity but when it does come to my professional identity, it does feel like a loving call and response. I show up in response to something that is pulling me, towards sharing with my people, towards collaboration with ideas that want to express themselves through me.

And it does feel so loving and so harmonious and there's no element of hustle or pressure or I should. There's no shift manager. And I mean, I guess this is what a lot of creativity teachers would call working with your muses. And I wonder, what's your experience with that because your work is...

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

Kara: I want to talk about that, I want to answer that. But as you're talking, something's coming up for me, which is really interesting to me because if really what we were valuing was the thing we were producing, then I think you could end up - you could need to take a break, be sick, go on maternity leave, end up older and not able to do the widgets.

And you would have already produced the things you produced. So it should feel fine. So I don't really think it is about the producing. I think it's about the moral value of working as an act. Of like, having to be in the process of producing all the time. Otherwise, I should be able to be like, listen, I came up with relativity, I'm done now.

Simone: Right. But that's not how it works.

Kara: Right. I have this amazing idea when I was 19 - and that's not that Einstein was 19, but you know what I mean. You should be able to be like, okay, I came up with a big huge thing of value to the world and now I can just do nothing for the rest of my life and not feel bad about it.

But that's not what we're describing. When you're hooked into that productivity hustle, you never think you've done enough. I don't really think it's about the actual creation of value. It's about the judgment of the self for not constantly being in the act of producing. Now we're going to end up in Marxist theory.

Simone: Such an important distinction.

Kara: Yeah. But it's like, I mean, this is one of the Marxist critiques of capitalism is that - I love this podcast episode - is that people are turned into the means of production and that their value is only as the means of production of capital that accrues to somebody else. A profit it accrues to somebody else.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

But regardless of the profit part, the dehumanizing part is turning humans into means of production. And so if we are believing that our only value comes from our productivity, and I think we are, I think we have to be careful not to be like, I just want to produce things of value for the world. Then it should be okay to be done at some point. So that's that - just a little side note about Marxism.

In terms of what I experience, yeah, I don't experience - yours sound lovely. I would sign up for that. But that's not what I experience I don't think. What I experience is I think maybe one thing is I have always been very mission-driven in my life. All of my jobs have been kind of in that same way. And so that feels the same.

Simone: You would do it if there was no reward ever and you never got recognized for it. You would just be driven to do something towards...

Kara: Yeah. I just have always felt like this is - I mean, I was raised with a very strong kind of social justice, your job is to make the world a better place and in Judaism, there's this idea of tikkun olam, which is the idea that the world is broken and we're all responsible for making it whole. So it's like, all of our jobs to contribute to make the world a better place.

Simone: Doesn't feel like a should to you, does it?

Kara: No, but it's almost like - yeah, that has never felt like a should. Either because it's internal or just the socialization happened so early. It's just never even up for debate. I understand other people don't think that and I'm not judging other people for not thinking that.

Simone: I think that's what I'm characterizing as the pull, right?

Kara: Yeah. I think I've just always felt that. The should comes in for me much more with specific projects or ways of doing things, or specific kinds of work. I think for me that yeah, maybe it doesn't feel like a strong pull

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

because I'm so used to it. But what I feel is much more - it's just when there's a lot of should-ing, then there's just so much drama and resistance and I'm white-knuckling through doing the work.

And when I'm able to just be like, to allow myself to rest and to trust that I will want to, it really reminds me so much of the process of going through intuitive eating. Stopping dieting and learning how to intuitively eat. And it's like the difference between so many people try to use intuitive eating as a diet.

They're like, well, I'm going to allow, as long as at the end I'm going to lose weight or at least not gain. So you're never actually in allowance at all because you have an agenda the whole time about what's supposed to happen and you're constantly monitoring it to see if it's happening or not.

And so what I experience when I'm able to really be in this allowance of my natural rhythms and with not the should-ing and letting go of the stuff I don't want to do and all of that, it really just feels much more - it's less feeling pulled to get to my computer and do the work, and it's much more just feeling like, well of course there's nothing in the way. The same way that - it's like the same amount of pull as I would feel like, eat when I'm hungry or sleep when I'm tired.

Simone: Kind of like just noticing and letting gravity do its thing, rather than...

Kara: Yeah. It doesn't feel like the - I think in the beginning of my coaching career also, I mean, part of this may be - in the beginning, the first two to three years, I did feel like that.

Simone: You're just jaded now.

Kara: Exactly. I no longer. It's more - I think it's less jaded and more like you've settled into a deep companionate relationship with your work. I'm

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

like, listen, okay, we don't fuck three times a day anymore but we still know how to...

Simone: Hold each other.

Kara: Yeah, get each other off. We're still having sex. It feels - I think in the first couple years, there's just this wild this is my life, what is happening? I get to do this work and it's changing people's lives and you're just so fired up and that's a beautiful time. And one of the tragedies of perfectionism is that it robs coaches and anybody of enjoying that time. So that's the only time it's going to feel like that. That's what it feels like those first three years.

So it'd be like your honeymoon period with a partner and you spent the whole time criticizing yourself and the relationship. And then now five years in, it just feels much more like when I'm in the headspace that I want to be in about this, it feels as easy as sleeping when I'm tired, eating when I'm hungry, sitting down to do the work that I want to get done this week because this project is going - it's just no drama.

Simone: I actually think it's so interesting too because I think we are presenting two - not different perspectives, but coming from different angles. Because you have such a brilliant discursive intellect and I'm a lot more like, spacey and flowy.

And for me, it's so critical to be plugged into that flow thing for me to shift out of the should hustle mode. Even if it's doing something dumb and annoying, I don't know, like arranging something on my calendar or doing something that Pavel wants me to do.

Kara: Our Pavel is the butt of all of our podcast complaints. We love you Pavel.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

Simone: You're the best. Right, so it's like, I don't want to figure out how to use this mic. Whatever. And the thing that - so often, I make myself plug into, but really what is this really about? And I have to plug into when I set up this mic, even though I don't want to do it, wish Pavel could do it for me, when I do it, it's in service of me being able to reach people, whatever.

So that part of it, my personality is such that it's really important for me to plug into that purposefulness, the pull towards service, the pull towards whatever creative expression. That's where I get a lot of my energy. And when I don't get that, I feel like I have built the discipline and the kind of way of being where I can do that without drama. It's like, alright, just show up and do the thing and we're not going to have a big whatever about it, right?

Kara: Yeah. I think that - it's interesting. I also think I'm somebody who's very prone to extremes. Prone to extremes - pre-coaching, prone to extreme of emotion. I mean, it's funny because I would never - I'm not an adrenaline junkie. I would never jump out of a plane. I'm not prone to that kind of extreme.

But I'm prone to being interested in extremes of emotional experience. And I think just I'm naturally very roller-coastery, which is why I came to coaching in the first place. And so part of it I think is like, I've experienced both. I've experienced the hating, dreading of work, and then I've experienced the high of it.

And I think right now where I am in my life is like, a lot about balancing that out. And balance always sounded so boring to me, and I still create space in my life for certain kinds of extremists really that are much more negotiated and contained and done on purpose. But I do think I feel much more these days like the state of flow I want to be in is a state of flow that is more about flowing through my days in an easier way. I don't know, it's hard to explain, but it just feels more diffuse.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

Simone: Movement without resistance, right?

Kara: Yeah. It's just sort of like, oh, what would be here without all the noise? And I think in some ways, for me right now, excitement is its own kind of noise and it's sort of like, what if life like - I know how to create excitement. I can create positive and negative. I'm very good at that.

And what is my life - I think because I'm doing a lot of this work in my personal life, in my personal relationships. It's like, what is it like to - what is this like in the absence of the noise, which in some ways for me is what the thought work element of coaching is all about. What is it we are truly encountering and experiencing in the absence of noise? And I also think some of the difference we're describing is...

Simone: What's the answer to that?

Kara: I think it's just there's no words for it. It's just the experience of being an animal in the world. But I do think we also experience - I don't feel at all that we need to converge on one explanation or description. I'm not saying you do either. But we definitely - I do think you are more, I wouldn't say spacey or whatever you said. I would say you're more - from the outside, you seem to operate more with a sort of - almost the difference between calling and mission. You're called to something and in conversation with something.

Simone: You don't think that way?

Kara: I don't feel like I'm in conversation with something, no. I mean, of course I feel like I'm in conversation with people and I love that and that's how I think through ideas. I love we're having this conversation right now. But no, I've never felt like - I don't have that spiritual aspect to my experience. I don't feel like I'm a channel for something. I don't feel like the ideas are out there and coming to me. I don't believe in god, I don't feel like I have a relationship with the divine. That's just not kind of my experience.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

My experience is very it's fucking crazy just to be a human. I had a long-term romantic partner who not only believed in god, was Christian, believed in Jesus, had a personal relationship with Jesus. And I'm Jewish and don't believe in god so that was a big difference.

But a lot of the things he would describe as religious experiences I was like, oh, I've totally felt that. I just followed a different thing. I call it just walking down the street and having some crazy brain experience about the transcendence of life and beauty. I don't know, that's what's happening in there.

But I think part of the difference in what we're describing is just a difference - it may not even be a different experience, but a difference in how we talk about and describe and define that experience. If we wanted to get all astrology about it...

Simone: I was just...

Kara: I know. I could feel it coming out of your brain. My psychic powers. That's the weird part. I'm unfortunately slightly psychic, even though I don't believe in it. But it's very grounded, very...

Simone: You're in denial of - you're actually just a witch.

Kara: Yes, I totally think I'm a Jewish witch. But yeah, very grounded, very physical, very in the here and now, what is this world. And I'm not very attuned in my opinion to the - I think I am probably. I'm witchy about other people, but I don't feel like I'm witchy about a different realm.

Simone: I disagree. I think that you just talk about it using different language.

Kara: Yeah, that's possible too.

Simone: Because you're somebody who responds to seasons.

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

Kara: That to me is like the world though. In my mind, you're having a conversation with some kind of otherworldly spirit.

Simone: I think you are too, but you just don't think that it is. You just think it's you having a brain experience. I'm like, no.

Kara: Where is the opposite? You think you're right or I think you're having a brain experience.

Simone: I am totally allowing space for your flawed worldview.

Kara: I appreciate that about you. That's very - what's your astrology sign again?

Simone: Quadruple Pieces for everybody who's listening.

Kara: I thought there was going to be some Virgo in there.

Simone: Little bit, yeah. I have a Virgo moon.

Kara: Oh my god, also we're like, at an hour.

Simone: Oh my god, I've only talked about one of the seven tenants of different...

Kara: That way you can do seven more podcasts.

Simone: Brilliant. Oh my gosh, okay, but I just want to say this though. I think the principles by which humanity functions are the same because we're all built the same. And you can be spiritual and call it one thing, you can be pragmatic and call it another thing, but it's like gravity works the same for everybody.

Our bodies work the same, you know, with variation of course. And I think it's important for people to hear there's different ways of understanding and processing but it doesn't mean we're all actually having different - I actually

UFYB 172: Productivity, Self-Worth, and the Industrial Revolution: A Conversation with Simone Seol

fundamentally don't care if my spiritual experience is just my brain being crazy and this organic experience of nature doing its thing. I think it doesn't take away from the mystery either way and it doesn't take away from the crazy experience that is being human.

Kara: I think most coaches are pragmatists at heart because we're like, okay, but is it helpful?

Simone: LCS coaches are pragmatists.

Kara: LCS coaches are pragmatists at heart, yeah, but that's what I love about this work is like, even my thoughts about the model, I'm like, is that helpful though? It's just always back to what result am I getting? What's happening here? I feel like we could do 12 more of these. We should just have a whole - we might just have to have our own podcast.

Simone: That felt like the opening speech of the symposium.

Kara: I know. I feel like we need to have a once-a-month serial podcast where we're just like, life coaching in intellectual history.

Simone: I would actually fucking love that.

Kara: I would totally do that. Alright, we're going to talk about the rest of this offline.

Simone: Okay, we'll talk to y'all later.

Kara: Bye.

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